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ELEMENTS OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE last century has witnessed the loosening of many bonds, the undoing of many ties, the constraint of which men once accepted cheerfully, or without question or at least without complaint. Conventions of thought, of speech, of behaviour, which prevailed not long ago, have lost their force; relationships, which were lately definite and clearly understood, have been dissolved. The result of this tendency, of these changes, has been twofold; it has given a new liberty, and has quickened the desire for a liberty still wider; it has produced a new disorder, an unexampled chaos, and threatens us with the disintegration of society.

To-day men talk of "Reconstruction," of "Educational Reconstruction," and fastidious persons who dislike, must yet hear and even use, the language of their generation. But they may also ask what this language means. Does "reconstruction" mean putting together again the parts of a broken thing, the service which

a carpenter might render to a shattered cupboard, or a toy-maker to the *disjecta membra* of a favourite, but hard-used, doll? Or does it mean re-arrangement, a novel disposition of old materials for some fresh purpose? A handy man can make a linen-press into a book-case, or a kennel into a rabbit-hutch, to gratify his altered tastes. Or does it mean the importation of a new idea? An architect may, for better or for worse, "reconstruct" an ancient cottage or a church; not simply using over again the original materials, but perhaps discarding some of them, and adding new, and subduing new and old to an original, or an ancient conception, long-forgotten and now revived. It is unfortunate that those who have most freely spoken of reconstruction have not been generous in explanation, but on the contrary have withheld from the world the definition which would have made their speech intelligible.

Are we, when the war is over, simply to restore our educational system, disturbed and disarranged by the troubles of these times, to its former condition? Probably there are very few people who entertain such a purpose; and

it is enough to say that it cannot, by whomsoever entertained, be fulfilled. But there are many who want a re-arrangement; a new emphasis here or there; they will turn back to front, and inside out; they will have "*things*" and not *books*; "*practical*" work and not *ideas*; or again they will give to what they call "*science*" the prominence which they believe has been hitherto given to what they cannot quite easily bring themselves to call the "*humanities*"; or again they are for improving the status and increasing the salaries of teachers; or for lengthening the period of schooling, or for making the Universities as free as the Public Elementary Schools. These are proposals for re-arrangement, and they may be good, some or all of them.

But only upon a condition. These things and others which have been, or may be, proposed will be good only if they become parts of a coherent system, and are set in their proper places within it by a governing, an overmastering principle, by a pervasive and unifying idea. Particular obligations may be undone, without loss or with positive benefit

for us; but if, with the cancelling of particular obligations, the sense of obligation is dulled and destroyed, the changes through which we have passed and are yet passing, will have brought us no advantage, but sheer disaster.

What then, we must inquire, is to preserve, and even to strengthen for us the sense of obligation, the feeling of society, the consciousness of relationships? For without this sense, this feeling, this consciousness a national life cannot be maintained, and a national education cannot be established.

The idea of obligation, and especially as expressed in the subjection of the individual to the State, is not unnaturally distasteful to us at the present moment, when we have before our eyes the spectacle of a State which seems to have despoiled its members of their humanity, and has become an idol to ignorance and an instrument to cruel aggression.

But the idea may still take for itself another form, already drawn in a Divine allegory, already attempted by men who have yielded to its argument and its charm. It may take the form of a "Kingdom of Heaven" or of a

"City of God," a society which recognises no frontiers of time or of place, but has room within its mild and universal empire, for those who find within themselves room also for it. For, it is said, "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." This flow and ebb, this outgoing and return, between the Infinite in which all men have their being and the Infinite which is the individual life,—this, too, is obligation. But it is also Freedom; and the common name in which these two ideas are united, in equality each giving significance to the other, is Religion.

The object with which these lectures were given was to suggest to teachers that their main function was to re-discover, and to restore to its just authority—Religion. And, inasmuch as the business of Education is one not for teachers alone, but rather for Society as a whole, of which teachers are at once members and agents, what was prepared for the smaller is now offered to the larger audience.

E. T. C.

LIVERPOOL,
February, 1918.

In that fair world, one only was the Friend,
One golden stream, one spring, one only end.
There only one did sacrifice and sing
To only one Eternal Heavenly King.
The union was so strait between them two,
That all was either's which my soul could view:
His gifts and my possessions, both our treasures;
He mine, and I the ocean of His pleasures.
He was an ocean of delights from Whom
The living springs and golden streams did come;
My bosom was an ocean into which
They all did run. And me they did enrich.
A vast and infinite capacity,
Did make my bosom like the Deity,
In whose mysterious and celestial mind
All ages and all worlds together shined,
Who tho' he nothing said did always reign,
And in Himself Eternity contain.
The world was more in me, than I in it.
The King of Glory in my soul did sit,
And to Himself in me He always gave
All that He takes delight to see me have,
For so my spirit was an endless sphere,
Like God Himself, and Heaven, and Earth was there.

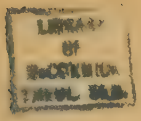
TRAHERNE: *Silence*.

καὶ ἀληθῆ λέγουσι· κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητής ἐστι καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἷός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἂν ἔνθεός τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ· ἕως δ' ἂν τοῦτ' ἔχῃ τὸ κτῆμα, ἀδύνατος πᾶς ποιεῖν ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος καὶ χρησμῳδεῖν.

PLATO: *Ion*, 534 B.

τί οὖν, ἔφη, ἔτι ἂν ἡμῖν λοιπὸν τῆς νομοθεσίας εἴη; καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον, ὅτι ἡμῖν μὲν οὐδέν, τῷ μέντοι Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖς τά τε μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα καὶ πρῶτα τῶν νομοθετημάτων. τὰ ποῖα; ἦ δ' ὅς. ἱερῶν τε ἱδρύσεις καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἄλλαι θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων καὶ ἡρώων θεραπεῖαι, τελευτησάντων τε αὖ θῆκαι καὶ ὅσα τοῖς ἐκεῖ δεῖ ὑπηρετοῦντας ἵλεως αὐτοὺς ἔχειν. τὰ γὰρ δὴ τοιαῦτα οὔτ' ἐπιστάμεθα ἡμεῖς, οἰκίζοντές τε πόλιν οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ πεισόμεθα, ἐὰν νοῦν ἔχωμεν, οὐδὲ χρησόμεθα ἐξηγητῇ ἀλλ' ἢ τῷ πατρῴῳ· οὗτος γὰρ δήπου ὁ θεὸς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις πάτριος ἐξηγητὴς ἐν μέσῳ τῆς γῆς ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀμφαλοῦ καθήμενος ἐξηγεῖται.

PLATO: *Republic*, IV. 427 B.



CHAPTER I

I AM to address you, in five lectures, on the subject of Religious Instruction, a subject so difficult that persons far more competent than I to deal with it prefer to keep silence. The greater part of what I wish to say on it, I cannot put into short, sharp sentences, and I would not if I could—yet, I can tell you what is my starting point.

By religion I mean belief in God, and the practices, the conduct, the mode of life which come from it—and by religious instruction I mean teaching which has for its object, the nurturing of that belief, and the fostering of the practices, the conduct, the mode of life—whatever they may be—which come from it. That is what I mean; I purpose in the rest of the time allotted to me, to explain and illustrate my meaning, in the hope that it may at last become clear to myself; at the end with good fortune I may have come round to my starting point again, carrying with me some dust of a long journey, certainly, but perhaps also something better, won in its course.

I hope that nothing will offend you, or even disturb your own meditations on this subject.

A period like this, set aside from our ordinary duties and given to consideration of a matter of cardinal importance may be full of benefit, derived by chance from a speaker's words, but more certainly from the listener's mind, if he will listen to himself.

So much by way of preface.

You will soon be seeking, and I do not doubt, presently finding, appointments in Schools. You or your friends on your behalf will make known your qualifications to Committees and Governing Bodies and Heads of Schools.

Those of you who are to find your places in Secondary Schools will profess themselves able to teach Latin, or a Modern language, or History, or some section of History, or Mathematics, or one, or several of those subjects of human enquiry which are collectively, and curiously named Science. And there will not fail you those, who having attempted to teach you one or other of these things will have persuaded themselves, and will try to persuade others that you in your turn can teach them.

Those others of you, I trust the larger number, who are to be employed in Elementary Schools, will make a heavier demand upon your sponsors, but you will discover that they are not unwilling to declare that for the manifold and exacting duties of these Schools, you are equipped, not only by your physical energy, and by your stoutness of heart, but by knowledge also. We cannot all of us do all things; but there is no reason why, when you are young you should not try to do a great many. Time and experience prune with a relentless knife, and it may be that those who put forth many blossoms may still have some spared when many have been cut away; and that those who have concentrated their sweetness and their strength in a single bloom may run the greater risk.

But, however you may decide to make your adventure as teachers, it is unlikely that you will declare that ability to give religious instruction is one of the few or of the many claims which you can make upon the consideration of the world: and it is unlikely that you will be asked in advance what you can do in this subject. Yet, wherever you go, to schools of whatever kind, and in whatever part of the

country,—the exceptions are so rare that you may reasonably neglect them—you will find at once that to give religious instruction is one of your duties. You may call yourself a Specialist, if you like the title; but this duty will be added to whatever else you believe you are specially competent to do: you may be a general practitioner, and this will fall among your tasks.

It is worth while to ask why neither candidates nor electors make enquiry, or volunteer statements about this matter. At the outset of their career candidates for posts are apt to make the list very long of the things which they believe themselves able to undertake. Later they may look back with surprise, and even with horror, upon the too crowded advertisement of their youthful proficiency, and will regard the success which mere effrontery won for ignorance with a peculiar remorse more bitter than the regret, mixed with amusement, for the well merited failure which chilled and tempered the hot ambitions of earlier years. But the amplest catalogue written by untutored hope has no word about religious instruction. Why is this? Three reasons, at least, may be found. The first, and

perhaps the most general, is that we have not thought about the matter at all: if it had occurred to us, no doubt we should have put it down in our list. Another reason is that we take this part of our work as a thing of routine —to be accepted, of course, like the time for arrival at morning school, and the marking of attendance registers—necessary and important things, though not of a kind to call upon our special knowledge or ability: things to be got through and done with before the real, the serious business of the day begins. A third reason, is that being aware that to give religious instruction will be part of our work, but having no clear notion as to the nature of the demands which it will make upon us, distrusting ourselves a little, and a little alarmed at the uncertain prospect, we yet hope that all will be well, that we shall, as we say, "get into" it, and do at any rate as well as others, who so far as we can tell have had no more preparation for it than ourselves.

And what is true of candidates for appointments is often true about those who have the appointments in their hands; they may not have thought about this matter; or they may regard it as a thing of routine and almost mechanical

performance; or, once more, distrusting our competence a little, or more than a little, and somewhat alarmed at what may be done by our uncertain hands, they also yet hope that all will be well, and that we shall fulfil not worse than our forerunners and our colleagues a task which the community has imposed, without, on its part, considering with any precision what is the nature of the demand which it makes upon teachers, what service it is intended to render to their pupils, and to the community itself. "This is our custom" we may declare, assuming that what is customary is good, and forgetting that much which is bad is also enjoined by custom. Or, speaking more boldly, or more ignorantly, "this is a *good* custom," we may say; not reflecting that we have no title to call it good until we have asked and answered the question "*Why* is it good?"

It is the custom, then, in England for the pupils of Schools to be assembled at the beginning of the day with their teachers, to sing a hymn, to listen to something read from the Bible, to hear and repeat a prayer, or prayers, and then to go to their several classes to receive instruction in parts of the Bible, and in

the Denominational Schools as they are called, in books which give the special teaching prescribed by various Churches. Then again, at the end of the day, they are all once more assembled to sing a hymn, and to say a prayer before going home. And the whole of this is commonly called religious instruction, and the time set apart for it is marked upon the time-tables of schools as time given to religious instruction. A critic might raise an objection against the practice of calling by one name activities so diverse as the singing of a hymn, or the saying of a prayer, and learning the order of the kings of Judah, and of Israel, or tracing the stages of St Paul's Missionary journeys. These (latter), he might say, may properly be called parts of instruction, these others may not. But such a critic should be silenced by two arguments—he must be reminded that one of the best ways of teaching pupils to do anything is to do it with them; and that when teachers, with their pupils, sing a hymn (for they will not be mere listeners) or with their pupils say a prayer (for they will not be mere police to keep order while a prayer is said) they are teaching—when in the presence of their pupils, they engage in these religious

observances, they are teaching their pupils themselves to offer praise and prayer; and when they impart information on the subjects which we have named and on kindred subjects, their teaching is prompted by the very same emotions which make them sing hymns or say prayers and is intended to fill their pupils with these emotions, for their instruction is, by definition, religious, it is full of religion.

The critic should, I think, be silenced by these arguments, but I know that he will not be silenced, or if silenced, not convinced by them, unless they are supported and strengthened by some further considerations. Certainly he will want us to tell him more fully and more exactly what we wish him to understand by the word "religious" and by the phrase "full of religion."

Religion is defined by Skeat as "Piety, the performance of duties to God and man." The word comes, he tells us, from the root from which we get the words, *reek* and *reckon*—to give heed, to take account, and the word, substantive or verb, *neglect*—the withholding of care, the refusal of attention. Cicero* expresses and amplifies the same theory. Learning under

* *De Natura Deorum*, II, 28, Tr. Brooks.

the stress of necessity to look before and after, and warned by danger to cast their regard on this side and on that, men have come "to the right and useful discovery of the phenomena of nature." Gathering up what varied experience has taught them, and pondering it they learn to trace through series of recurrent phenomena, the operation of several forces, to which they come to attribute a divine quality. "False beliefs, frantic errors, and superstitions things to which it is in the highest degree foolish to give either utterance or credit," will spring up in their minds, yet their observation for all its imperfection, or their folly, will enable them "to understand the being and character of the gods who extend through the nature of each thing; Ceres, through the earth, Neptune, through the sea," and so on, "together with the name by which custom has designated them, and it is these gods whom we ought to reverence and worship. And the worship of the gods which is best and also purest, and holiest and most full of piety is that we should always reverence them with a mind and voice that are without stain and guiltless and uncorrupt; for religion has been disassociated from superstition not only by philosophers, but

by our ancestors as well." Superstition, we are to understand, is extravagant and fanciful credulity, and the superstitious are those who yield themselves to it; "while such as heedfully repeated, and as it were 'regathered' (*relegerent*) everything that formed part of the divine worship were named religious from *relegere*."

But if Professor Skeat can claim the support of Cicero, he cannot reckon every modern philologist as an ally; some at any rate of his contemporaries, who also can cite early writers, Lactantius, for instance, and St Augustine on their side, trace the derivation of the word to the Latin *religare*, and find in it not only the suggestion, but the sense of binding.

Professor Skeat's own definition might have been framed to support the theory against which he is careful to warn us. Piety is a natural bond, duty is another name for obligation.

It is not within my province or my power to enter into a philological discussion. The use which the world has made of the word is more important to us than the origin to which the learned would assign it, and we may the more willingly accept the general use in this instance

since it seems to give as much credit to the one as to the other of the rival doctrines. It is the inveterate, the secular habit of men to record and reflect upon experience, and to try to look beyond its border. Within the compass of what they have suffered with pain or happily enjoyed they believe themselves able to detect tendencies; facts group themselves together according to likenesses and separate themselves off from others which are unlike, and these again form into associations. Events succeed one another and are repeated in the same sequence, while others fall into other series—these things, noted and remarked again and again, provoke enquiry. Why should they be as they are, why should they pursue these lines and not others, what is their origin? For answer men look beyond the pale of knowledge; or rather, they press out the boundaries which have held them in, and draw into the region of the known and understood as much as they can, as much as they dare, of what they dimly see and faintly feel. For beyond the circle, however large, and however bright, of their vision, there lies a margin, the home of tremulous hope and fantastic fear, and upon the further edge an all enveloping

darkness. When they try to account for the things which betide them—the coming and the fresh return of Summer and of Winter, of seed time, and of harvest, the dawn of day, and birth, the increasing splendour of the sun, and the maturing power of man, the fall of evening, and the decline of age, their speculation takes them always and at least, into that dim region, and often bids them strain their eyes into the further darkness. But it is not these things alone which prompt them to wonder and to questioning. Sickness and health, lassitude and vigour of body and mind are felt, remembered and become the subjects of anxious reflection. The tranquil surface of what is usual is broken by strange visitations of earthquake, or plague, which make ruin of the homes of men and torment, disfigure and destroy their bodies: and their minds are no less obnoxious to forces invisible, it is true, but equally vehement and terrible in their operation. The sudden alarm that visits a lonely spirit, like the first heralding breath of storm, rippling the smooth waters of a yet untroubled lake, or stirring the grass, or bending the frightened trees: the panic which falls strangely upon a crowd of men and shakes them with ill-appre-

hended, but deep and common alarm, these too move the mind to thought, and to think is to seek for reasons. If such incursions upon the ordinary life of men are memorable, as indeed they are, it is partly because they are rare. Memorable, too, and these also in part for their rarity, are moments not of cold and lonely fear, or tumultuous alarm, or pain that quickens by torturing the sense, but moments rather of some special security, of keen and individual delight, or of joy in commonalty spread—when the mind is held by

> Sweet meditations, the still overflow
> Of present happiness*,

a happiness springing from so deep and inexhaustible a sense that memory† becomes not a grave but a dwelling, and after many years men discover and declare that

> Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
> Her dew is on the flowers‡.

* Wordsworth, *Prelude*, VI, 43–4.

† When for the seeing eye
"Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp."
ib. IV, 324.

‡ *ib.* VI, 51–2.

But peace need not bring lethargy to the mind; it is rather the condition of the clearest reflection. Men who reckon with intelligent confidence upon the ordered procession of the seasons, giving them the kindly fruits of the earth, reckon also upon the gentle alternation of labour and reward, of healthy weariness and refreshing rest, upon the things which give them hope, as well as upon those which bring them fears, and upon hope itself, the normal disposition of the mind. And whether they regard what is rare either in its devastating fury, or in its exhilarating influence, or rather fix their minds upon what is usual, and because usual of a kind to maintain the equilibrium of their lives, they are apt to look for it again, beyond the confines of what they know, in the regions which their eyes can penetrate little or not at all. Yet if they cannot see, they will not abandon their quest; they grope their way into places of dread or of hope, and pausing in exhaustion or expectancy feel the darkness vibrant, its vast silence trembling with the breath of a presence, a "Mighty Being" awake; and dread and hope mingling, become an awful confidence. Then they go back into the circle of things more common, but no

longer more real, taking with them the quickened sense of obligation, of relationship, and with more sedulous care they gather up, they link together, and make a chain, a sequence, if they can, of memories and customs, their own and what they have inherited from their kindred of the past; for they perceive that practices of their own invention, or received from their fathers, and now become matters of routine and uncritical convention, are parts of an age-long ritual by which men have sought to give order and unity to their life, by bringing its elements, whether apparently of trifling account, or of great but ill-apprehended significance, all into harmony with what they have learnt in their felicitous or troubled commerce with the Unseen. I have used an imperfect metaphor of a ring of light or knowledge, circled by another of dim obscurity, itself encompassed by thick darkness. The image may have its uses, but only if it is at once corrected —for the region of clearness is in fact no well-formed circle, but has a broken edge, and is riven to its core by lines or lanes of darkness; and those other realms, which we may call, for convenience and in comparison, those of half-light and of complete darkness are themselves

shot and spangled, like the floor of heaven thick inlaid with patines of bright gold, or traced by rays issuing from a sun itself hidden by dense clouds. Then the beholder encountering the unfamiliar at the heart of what is ordinary, and the familiar remote, but firmly set, in what is strange, looks no longer abroad, but in a new mode of peaceful contemplation, turns his regard upon his own mind, and finding the world there, seeks there also for an explanation of its mystery.

> How shall I seek the origin? where find
> Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
> Oft in these moments such a holy calm
> Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
> Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in the mind*.

A dream is of the night, and night is dark, but not for that reason, of necessity, a time either of false and fanciful illusion or of mere unthinking terror. The steps men take within the boundaries of what is clear to them are measured and directed by those boundaries themselves; what marks the edge of illumination marks not less decisively the margin of

* Wordsworth, *Prelude*, II, 348 seq.

that tract in which bodily eyes cannot avail. Then the mind, trusting a second sight, finds not only repose in darkness, but a vivid reality which may surpass that of common day. Death comes like sleep with darkness as evening draws her gradual dusky veil, or suddenly as upon an eclipsed sun in mid-day, and as men have explored the darkness which falls with death, so they have examined and recorded what they took from the darkness which is the companion of sleep, and from both they have got the food of hope, as in both they have won some clearer intimations than their waking hours have afforded of their own meaning, and of the consonant meaning of the world in which they live, of the world which lives in them. This is no idle conceit, for everyone may for himself test its truth, and if we share it with rude and primitive men, it is the common inheritance of every later age.

I shall not attempt in my own words to develop this theme, for it has been perfectly and finally set in the *Religio Medici*.

"I thank God" Sir Thomas Browne wrote "for my happy dreams as I do for my good rest; for there is a satisfaction in them unto reasonable desires, and such as can be content with a fit of happiness: and surely it is not

a melancholy conceit to think we are all asleep in this World, and that the conceits of this life are as mere dreams to those of the rest; as the Phantasms of the night, to the conceits of the day.... We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul. It is the ligation of sense but the liberty of reason, and our waking conceptions do not match the Fancies of our sleeps.... Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams; and this time also would I choose for my devotions: but our grosser memories have then so little hold of our abstracted understandings that they forget the story, and can only relate to our awaked souls a confused and broken tale of that that hath passed.... It is observed that men sometimes upon the hour of their departure, do speak and reason above themselves; for then the soul, beginning to be freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality. We term sleep a death; yet it is waking that kills us and destroys those spirits that are the house of life. It is indeed a part of life that best expresseth death; for every man truly lives, so long as he acts his nature, or some way makes good the faculties of himself.... It is that death by which we may be literally said to die daily; a death which Adam died before his mortality; a death whereby we live a middle and moderating point between life and death: in fine, so like death I dare not trust it without my prayers, and a half adieu unto the world and take my farewell in a Colloquy with God.

The night is come, like to the day,
Depart not thou, great God away.

Let not my sins, black as the night
Eclipse the lustre of thy light:
Keep still in my horizon; for to me
The Sun makes not the day, but thee.
Thou whose nature cannot sleep,
On my temples sentry keep;
Guard me 'gainst those watchful foes,
Whose eyes are open while mine close.
Let no dreams my head infest,
But such as Jacob's temples blest.
While I do rest, my soul advance,
Make my sleep a holy trance;
That I may, my rest being wrought,
Awake into some holy thought;
And with as active vigour run
My course, as doth the nimble Sun.
Sleep is a death; O make me try,
By sleeping, what it is to die;
And as gently lay my head
On my grave, as now my bed.
Howe'er I rest, great God, let me
Awake again at last with thee;
And thus assured, behold I lie
Securely, or to awake, or die.
These are my drowsy days; in vain
I do now wake to sleep again:
O come that hour, when I shall never
Sleep again, but wake for ever.

This is the Dormative I take to bedward; I need no other Laudanum than this to make me sleep; after which I close mine eyes in security, content to take my leave of the Sun, and sleep unto the Resurrection."

One is tempted to linger over this piece, and note the felicity of individual words, the smooth or subtle cadence of phrase, the aptness of the language to the thought, the heightening emotion which carries prose into poetry by a natural transition, the broken anticipations within the prose of what is given continuously in the poetry, leaving upon the mind the suggestion, the influence of a prelude overheard in fragments till at last, other sounds forgotten, the ear is held by the musical theme which it announced. But all these I must pass by; and note merely and summarily that a passage has been made from the commonplace world of what we call reality to the rarer world of a higher reality, and that some spirits are so much at home in it, some men there so "truly live," and "act their nature and make good the faculties of themselves" that when they return to the ordinary and the usual ground they find it, and not that other, strange and by comparison unreal. Yet fatigue and their own weight will bring back to the lower levels those who strive by any exaltation merely to escape. And if these alternatives of the soaring with the descending spirit are seen to be, what they are, stages in our development, we may readily

grant that the perfect spirit which we conceive only as incarnate does not seek in a distant heaven a refuge from earth, but proves itself native to earth and heaven by living with unshaken consistency in both at once. But for spirits less than perfect, the varying experiences of escape and recapture, and of flight and return are very natural and necessary; and they may find without impropriety, without reason for self-reproach that the most part of their lives they must spend not above the clouds, but beneath them on the earth, the kindly mother upon whom by a divine power they were begotten, whose bosom keeps the bones of their ancestors at rest and heaves with the breathing of their tranquil spirits. The world has been called an inn, but it is an inn to which we are accustomed, and we return to it with the feeling as of release from constraint when we have paid a visit to what we are told, and believe, is our true home. Amphibious creatures may find it easier to live upon one than upon the other of two elements to both of which they have a right, and are not lightly to be censured if they spend longer periods in that in which they live with the less effort.

We may appeal to Browning* for authority:

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
And try a life exempt

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought,—why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to oneself—"They fare
Scarce better, they need not scorn
Our sea, who live in the Air!"

Emancipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven—poetry:

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort.

Whatever they are, we seem;
Imagine the thing they know;
All deeds they do, we dream;
Can Heaven be else but so?

And meantime yonder streak
Meets the horizon's verge;

* *Amphibian.*

That is the land we seek
If we tire, or dread the surge:
Land the solid and safe—
To welcome again (confess!)
When, high and dry, we chafe
The body, and don the dress.

We may be forgiven, we may even forgive ourselves for welcoming the solid safety of land, when we tire of supporting ourselves, or become too much alarmed to let ourselves be supported by the sea's own buoyancy, provided that before the sudden, unaccountable invasion of fatigue or fear, we really trusted ourselves to the water, and honestly and unfeignedly delighted in it. Upon that condition we may be suffered, we may suffer ourselves, to return with a comfortable glow to the land, and to record our adventures, and even recall our lassitude or fright without shame. But the condition is inexorable. A pretence at being at our ease in the finer element at once robs us of our claim to be at home upon the heavier and more stable. We may be content with what Sir Thomas Browne calls "a fit of happiness" such as is granted to "abstracted and exstatick souls," to ourselves when "we are somewhat more than ourselves" provided that the

happiness, for how short a space so ever it lasts, is sincere, and we ourselves are in truth "abstracted and exstatick," removed and lifted above the plane on which we are wont to live to a plane rarely visited perhaps but not less real to us while we are in it. But a counterfeit heaven is paid for by those who will have it at the price of a false earth. There is no sure foothold on earth for us unless our conversation (some of it, at least) is in heaven: and we shall only find death a sleep if we welcome sleep as a foretaste of death, a period in which we may enjoy "the ligation of sense and the liberty of reason."

To claim a native right to the two worlds which are ours, and, by exercising our right, to make them one, may be easier for children than for many older people. We have, and show, a certain shyness in one, and a self-conscious confidence in the other, as of a man who is awkward and ill at ease in a drawing room, and tyrannous in his shop or his class room, or of another who affects in one an ease, and in the other a modesty, which he does not feel. Children, at any rate young children, have the advantage of us here, and yet even here they are at a disadvantage too. No man who be-

lieves in human progress can consistently maintain that childhood sums up in their perfection all human virtues. To enter any kingdom worth entering, and above all whatever we call a Kingdom of Heaven, it is necessary not for us to be, but to become, little children, not merely to recover childlike graces, which may be but a pretty veil drawn over imbecility, but to temper the vivid and varied colours, the hot and violent passions, the strident notes of mature experience, all to a harmony, to a simplicity which holds in firm government a host of tendencies, impulses and powers, ready without that government to break into discord. This is not the simplicity of childhood, but of seasoned age. Simple children treat the humble and the august with the same sweetness, or the same pretty and pardonable impertinence and make upon both the same demands, while they do not see the difference; but when they come to learn a little of the significance of dignity whether of office, or of station, or of age, they are often at a loss how to behave. The same behaviour is not appropriate in all circumstances and in all places and towards all persons, when once we have learnt the real distinctions which exist in

circumstances, places, and persons. An infant, carried to his christening, may, without reproach to himself, though not without extreme discomfort for his kindred and his sponsors, behave as he would in his nursery; but a man who should comport himself in a cathedral as he would in his club would deserve and receive our censure. He should be natural in both, and to be natural he must neither cause, nor allow, a divorce between one part of himself and another: to be natural he must be his whole self. Our difficulty is not that we have two or more worlds, but that we have two or more selves; if this marks an advance (as in a sense it may) upon the simplicity, the unity of childhood, it indicates also the need for a further advance to a new simplicity, a higher unity. There is no dissonance in unison, for none is possible; harmony is the reconciliation of divers tones. But harmony attempted and not achieved is discord, and hurt by that we resort to a single note, which lacks the clearness, if it is without the shrillness, of childish music.

I said that the object of religious teaching is to nurture the belief in God, and to foster the practices, the conduct, the mode of life—whatever they may be—which come from it. To

nurture this belief; not to implant it, for it is natural to children to believe in God. They are ready to find Him everywhere, until, misled by us, they learn to imagine that He may be imprisoned in a shrine, or His operation limited to special occasions. Yet it is not unfitting for us, who cannot long or in every place consciously sustain the ineffable communion of our spirits with the Eternal, to proclaim that some days or hours—those in which we unstop our ears and listen to the unsilenced Voice, and some places, those in which it is our wont, assembled with our fellows or in secret solitude to make such articulate answer as we may—to proclaim that these are specially holy. But the sanctity of these occasions and these rare hours of meditation and of prayer need not be diminished, if we let it spread and cover and conquer our less exalted moments, the lower levels of life. It need not be damaged by use, though it may be destroyed by vulgar familiarity. To keep the vivid conviction of mystery at the heart of the common and ordinary is the open secret of the religious, of those whose belief in God is insistent, but not strained, not affected but real. To seek the sacred place, and mark the holy time, and then to return, not without

a feeling of relief, over a measured distance homewards and keep the reckoning of common hours is well. We come back to land "the solid, the safe"—and it is better to come back than by attempting the waves too long, to be drowned, the victims, not of the sea, but of a conceit which cannot uphold us. But the imagery of the *Religio Medici* is nobler and stands for a more splendid fact. The dreams of which Sir Thomas Browne speaks are not sought by men, but visit them: and the bolder claim is one which children will not less well understand than the other which seems to demand more of human nature but in fact ascribes to it less of majesty. Or, shall we say, drawing upon a poet who often falls (from what a height!) upon the prose of the street, and also upon the prosaist who moves with so easy a pace to the controlled passion of poetry, that if it is our duty to seek God it is our destiny not to escape Him?

O Lord thou hast searched me and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo!

Oh Lord, thou knowest it, altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain to it.
Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee*.

* Psalm cxxxix.

CHAPTER II

MAN wonders and enquires, observes and records, trying always to explain the world to himself. He early learns to look for sequences, to trace them so far as the evidence which he has will allow, and along the lines of ordered recurrence to pursue the origin and cause of things. Its operation he believes he can detect; itself eludes him. Far as his sight may reach, it is confused by the obscurity which surrounds the ring of clear vision, and though practice trains the eye to a longer range, he is baulked and stopped at last by the darkness which lies beyond. Unwilling to go back with nothing won by so long and hazardous a pursuit, he halts obstinately or irresolutely. Then by some sense not sight, by a blind groping of hands sensitised by fear or by hope so timid as to be scarcely distinguished from fear, he becomes aware that, no longer the seeker, he is now the object of a search. A power, perhaps what he sought but what he could not find, has found and holds him. A sudden light shines in darkness, and is gone;

the astonished victim of the unheralded visitation returns to ordinary day, glad to receive again its mild influence, which falls with a soothing caress upon eyes dazzled and hurt by that rare brilliance; he touches with fond hands the common things, now grown somehow different and strange for all their persistent reality, after that strange and memorable experience. Back through the world he makes his way, and seeks refuge within himself—travelling as far as he can from that terrible margin of nameless dread or unimagined hope. But the self into which he tries now to withdraw is no other than the self which made that adventurous journey; and when he tries to understand himself his problem is larger than he previously knew. For here again is a core of darkness, made palpable by strange, illuminating beams, and a strong power seizes him; and lets him go only to fasten more firmly upon him, like a fetter, the impression of its presence. Somehow, with what a pathetic and pitiable fancy, yet somehow he must link what he has learnt within himself with what he learnt when he tried to travel beyond the boundaries not only of himself but of the common social life of his kindred. What if when he went so far and

explored the edge of outer darkness, it was himself whom he encountered? What if upon his return to the secret centre of his heart, it was God who there awaited him? Beset with dread, behind and before, he moves warily through the plain spaces of knowledge and of sight, to and fro between the darkness which lies beyond the bounds of the common world and that other, kindred darkness at the centre of his unexplored soul; and making his way again and again over the beaten paths, he seems to extend the paths themselves at either limit beyond the region of the familiar into the unknown.

In general these excursions and returns seem to have been for primitive men the occasions for alarm. They feared to penetrate the dark; but they could not but explore it; for their curiosity mastered their fear, the hunger of their sharp-set wonder goaded their timidity; and once in the dark, they feared to stay, terror now in its turn overcoming their eagerness to enquire. But fright was not their permanent or their only feeling. Fright is of the unknown, and though a visit made a hundredth time to a place of dread may be made perforce and with recurring fear, fear itself may now be mitigated

by the sense of familiarity. Familiarity may rob fear of its sting, either by taking the palpitating heart out of mystery and turning the mind from superstition to mere dullness, or, more happily, by the discovery that what still provokes and indeed demands fear may equally, and at the same time, engage love. Presently they come to take a delight in these explorations, they find again what once they found, something to be feared more deeply as it is loved more tranquilly, something which at all costs they must keep. Here, they believe, the many ways of the world converge; here the broken pattern of life is made complete. Fear and love alike prompt them to build in the mind a house, temple or prison, in which to keep securely the awful thing, fearing that it may escape and devastate the plain clear spaces of life; or, inasmuch as they love it too, concerned to make sure that it shall not escape them when they return to visit it again. The awful emotion must be noted, and for convenient memorial a place, not only in the mind but upon the earth, consecrated to its revival, and a time fixed for the appointed return. Such times and places, whether figured upon the chart of the mind and marked in its history or

reckoned by the hours of set days and common locality, become not only dear but very real; more real they seem and may be than all others. Yet in them we cannot rest; we are forced back into the routine of life and take up its ordinary tasks, sustained no doubt by the prospect of a return yet again, of another hour of renewed serenity or of awe-stricken contemplation.

But if man's first activity, at once and equally religious and scientific, is to wonder and enquire, to observe and record, seeking an explanation of the world, and an explanation, not less, as now we see, of himself, we must not suppose that any end in which he can be content is one from which enquiry and wonder are banished. For a time indeed he may suppose that it were so; and from time to time a pause may be granted him in which questioning will be hushed and even wonder merged in happiness (as it may also be drowned in mere unthinking distress), but from such a pause he springs with fresh energy to urge his quest anew, and realises that to answer his own question would be to annihilate himself. He looks once more upon the ordinary scene, and sees now things that he had not detected before, or new things which were not earlier offered to his

eyes; and the sequences which he thought he had traced, the order which he fancied he had established are broken up—for a larger system he must prepare his mind, and regather (religious once more) the elements of his enlarging problem and (religious still) bind them, with himself into a more complicated unity. But once again, and now more plainly than before, the pattern which he is trying to make out is seen to stretch beyond the borders of the ordinary and commonplace; and he betakes himself again to the dear resorts in which he has encountered the presence felt in darkness and held with it his silent speech. But a new difficulty awaits him.

He may find that the doorway, through which with the burden of his earlier problems he could make his way, will not admit him laden now with a bigger load. To enter he must abandon his problem, and thus by leaving it outside the shrine mark a final division and breach between the two parts of his life; or he may force a violent entrance destroying some part of what he once with reverent hands built up, and entering like a thief into the holy place may find that it is too small, too cramped, and its sanctity is departed; or a homeless spirit

once more, he may pass by what was the shelter of his soul, and press his way into the further darkness, accompanied by need and hope as his only attendants. The first of these courses is clearly the worst, and the last the best, and the second only good if it leads quickly, as for honest minds it will, to the last. All progress is made through surpassing what was once the best that we could conceive, that is, by passing it over, by abandoning it, and seeking in the vast chill spaces of an infinite world a new halting place which in its turn is to be a point of departure*.

A point of departure we may call it, but it is a point of vantage too from which we look back upon the traversed ground, hoping to judge its contour the better from our distance, or survey the crowded scene trusting, now that we are detached from it, to be better able to trace its movement and mark its characteristics. It was for this indeed that we set out, precisely to win this unifying vision, because we could endure no more the confusion of the crowd, because we were at a loss to make out the lie of the land, when we were well within its borders.

* See Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics*, p. 270 seq.

And escaped ourselves, the refuge won, we hope to hold what once was the cause of our vexation in a placid retrospect, and renew our affection for it. So men will leave their homes or their friends in order to maintain their old love, by the re-invigoration given by remoteness. But sometimes they are disappointed, and that when their need is greatest. For if the country traversed be too broad, or the pattern of their life at once too large and too complicated, the old view point will not serve to give the unity which was possible for a smaller field, for a less elaborate scheme of things. This theme has been finely illustrated by a writer whose insight and knowledge match the clearness of his style. Mr Graham Wallas, after reminding his readers in his *Human Nature in Politics**, that for Aristotle the "territory of a State must be 'visible as a whole' by one eye, and the assembly attended by all the full citizens must be able to hear one voice...[its] governing officials...able to remember the faces and character of all their fellow citizens" goes on:

> We ourselves are apt to forget that the facts on which Aristotle insisted were both real and important. The

* *loc. cit.*

history of the Greek and Mediaeval City-States shows how effective a stimulus may be given to some of the highest activities and emotions of mankind when the whole environment of each citizen comes within the first hand range of his senses and memory. It is now only here and there, in villages outside the main stream of civilization, that men know the faces of their neighbours and see daily as part of one whole the fields and cottages in which they work and rest. Yet even now, when a village is absorbed by a sprawling suburb or overwhelmed by the influx of a new industrial population some of the older inhabitants feel that they are losing touch with the deeper realities of life.

A year ago (he writes) I stood with a hardworking and hardthinking old Yorkshire schoolmaster on the high moorland edge of Airedale. Opposite to us was the country house where Charlotte Brontë was governess, and below us ran the railway, linking a string of manufacturing villages which already were beginning to stretch out towards each other, and threatened soon to extend through the valley an unbroken succession of tall chimneys or slate roofs. He told me how, within his memory, the old affection for place and home had disappeared from the district. I asked whether he thought that a new affection was possible, whether now that men lived in the larger world of knowledge and inference, rather than in the narrower world of sight and hearing, a patriotism of books and maps might not appear which should be a better guide to life than the patriotism of the village street. This he strongly denied; as the older feeling went, nothing, he said, had taken its place or would take its place...and then, almost in the words of Morris and

Ruskin, he began to urge that we should pay a cheap price if we could regain the true values of life by forgetting steam and electricity, and returning to the agriculture of the mediaeval village and the handicrafts of the mediaeval town.

He knew and I knew that his plea was hopeless.

So for ourselves, when the homely circle of our childish or youthful ideas and the little routine of practices in which they were adequately expressed is broken by a sprawling suburb of new notions, or overwhelmed by the influx of new commercial or academic thoughts, we may fear that we are losing touch with the deeper realities of life. We too may long for a return to the simplicity of earlier years—but no return is granted. We may stay, disillusioned and ill at ease, resenting what we are powerless to resist, or we may ourselves be overwhelmed by the flood of new and ill-related things, or we may attempt to win a new standpoint, more difficult to reach, but higher, from which with time as well as altitude to clear and enlarge our vision we may achieve in ourselves and so in the distracting scene on which our eyes rested, a fresh unity, and come to feel for it, not the old affection, but a kindred affection yet deeper, the counterpart of the deeper

serenity which we have learnt by the sacrifice of a more primitive peace to guard at our hearts. For the elementary we may have come to substitute the elemental.

If you remember the problem raised by the Samaritan woman—

> Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship,

you will not have forgotten the answer which she received—

> The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship.

The place of worship is the point at which the manifold elements of knowledge fall into proportion and concerted significance under the stress of poetic emotion, a creative impulse which makes all things new. Of this impulse man is most certainly the subject at those moments at which with the best title he might claim to be its master. As in the other domains, the several provinces of human energy, the artist is most original and creative when he is held and governed by a power other and stronger than himself, so here, in the general art of life, man may be most himself when in his effort to set its elements in proper place and

perspective, he discovers that he too is being set by the hand of a universal artificer in his place. He may try, like an artist, to stand back from the picture which he has drawn so as to see it properly, so long as he has something to stand upon, if, that is to say, the world provides a footing for him as well as a place for his picture. But if he tries to stand back from a larger picture, the world itself, to the making of which what he has himself contributed is very little in comparison with the whole, it would seem difficult for him to find any where to stand. And yet the human spirit both in confession of weakness and in vindication of its essential nature, in fact, of its spiritual quality, does withdraw from the world—and the greatest of teachers has encouraged this habit and counselled his followers to "come apart" for a while—to *come apart* from the world, and to *withdraw* from it. But the purpose of this withdrawal is not merely to repose in a place of refuge; it is to see the world clearly and as a whole, and more than that to draw it into a new scheme, a new whole of which the place of withdrawal is itself a part. Otherwise there can only be a coming and going between the common world and the sacred place, an increasing

divergence between the two, or at any rate growing emphasis upon the difference between them. Let me put this more simply—Sunday may be a day of withdrawal from the work and engagements of the other days, a day given to thoughts which are crowded out by the preoccupations of other days, a day on which we reckon and to which we look forward because of its unlikeness to other days. And it is no doubt good that we should regard it thus, but good upon a condition: viz., that its difference from other days is reconciled, that they, and the activities with which they are filled, should be adjusted and raised to its standards, and that its ideals should be made vivid and real and receive a content or meaning by reference to them. Sunday sentiments which are *hors de combat* during the rest of the week and week day practices which are not brought to the touchstone of Sunday doctrine and theory, are both alike dangerous and mischievous; for be the discrepancy between them ever so little, it is a difference which divides not only the week, but the man, into separate and ill-related elements. And what we want is to achieve a unity in ourselves.

One main reason why Sunday (the day of

withdrawal whatever it may be and in whatever place celebrated) is a day of tranquillity and rest is because we have learnt, not perhaps perfectly, but yet with no little success, to banish during it from our mind considerations which do not accord with the point of view which on that day we determine to maintain, because during it we subdue or expel moods and thoughts alien or hostile to what on that day we desire to be our dominant mood. Let us pursue this problem a little more closely with the aid of some instances. Let us say that Sunday is to be for us a day of peace, on which we try to put out of our minds our quarrels, and to remind ourselves that we should love our enemies, even if they are our neighbours. It is possible, by effort, on Sunday to mould our minds to this maxim, and we come in fact on that day really to entertain the feelings which we have told ourselves that we ought to entertain. But on Monday and throughout the week we renew and vehemently press our accustomed battles. A man need not be a very subtle thinker to note a contrast here. All men can see it. Now if we see it and are unwilling to acquiesce in a two-standard life, which is at best an uncomfortable and at worst a

dishonest life, we must reconcile our Sunday theory with our weekday practice. Let us suppose that we are loth to modify the theory, then we have to review our practice. But reviewing our practice, we are bound to review our neighbours, and we discover that our task is not so easy as it may have looked. For in them, most of them or all of them, we cannot but be aware of much that is by no means to be loved: with good qualities to which we may not hitherto have done justice they combine bad qualities which it would be insincere in us to ignore; their good deeds we record with happy gratitude, but we cannot pretend that there are no bad deeds to record, and for these we cannot express or feel the same sentiment. What then are we to do? We will not abandon our doctrine of the duty of loving our neighbours, but just as we try to consider the facts of our ordinary life in the light of our doctrine, we try to re-consider our doctrine in the light of these facts. The facts, with which we are concerned, may be simply stated—few if any of our neighbours are wholly good; many of them seem to be thoroughly bad; and while the worst have, or are said to have, some, though rare, good qualities, we cannot deny that the

best admit that they have, and quite clearly have, some, not necessarily rare, bad qualities. Now our doctrine if maintained without reference to these facts, will become an empty formula; and if we repeat it, we shall only be professing the duty of loving a neighbour such as no man ever had, i.e., a perfectly lovable neighbour. There is no good to be got from the repetition of empty words. Recognising this, and determined to hold fast both to our Doctrine and to the facts of this difficult world in which no neighbours or enemies are quite good and all enemies and neighbours are partly bad, what, I ask again, are we to do? The answer leaps to the lips. Without mutilating we can modify our doctrine; we can make it fit the facts, without losing its force; indeed, by fitting the facts it comes to have and exercise a new and unsuspected power. We say, not only that we must love our neighbours but that we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves—i.e., warmly, intimately, persistently, and yet critically, honestly, and even laughingly. The experience of life has not been ignored in the formula thus written more fully; the formula has not been sacrificed.

But a time may come, when try as we may,

we cannot so readily fit the facts to some formula which has hitherto sufficed for a simpler and narrower experience. The world presents us with facts such as those which have lately become part of our knowledge and our suffering, if our neighbours and enemies, not of our own but yet of a kindred people, seem to have gone in sheer wickedness beyond what we call the pale of humanity. How are we to bring our relations to them, the sentiments which we entertain towards them, within the control of our theory? The theory is one by which we have been able to reconcile ourselves with the world; it has been, for that reason, a working theory. It is true we have had to modify it by declaring that we must love our neighbours as ourselves; and what we may now note, but did not earlier remark, it is a working theory because it is part of a theory of wider range, the theory or doctrine that we must love God. But if these facts are hard to deal with, if no conception that we can just now form of neighbourliness will embrace the foes of our country, we must admit that just now, and in so far as that is true, our conception, whatever it may have been, of the love of God is threatened and shaken. What if hate as well as love appears to be a

duty, a necessary and inevitable thing? Is it easy to combine the two? Are we to say, and will the words keep a meaning, that hate burns at the heart of love, and is like an unquenched flame in the heart of God himself? It is certainly not easy to give any meaning to such words as these, though we may hope that they have a meaning which we cannot yet more clearly express. And there are many men for whom God has gone from His heaven because they cannot find an ancient and venerable form of words (the same perhaps as we ourselves have been wont to repeat) adequate to embrace and keep in coherent order the tumultuous warring facts of life as it is to-day. Gone, I said from His heaven—but not that; gone rather from *their* heaven, i.e. from the heaven in which *they* used to find Him; retreated now into a vaster realm, in which they cannot now find Him, but may at last find Him, after much searching and long and painful travelling.

We can guess what, not after all very long ago, men felt of misgiving and alarm when the comfortable Ptolemaic theory, which made this earth the centre of a Universe bounded by a firmament above and a firmament below, was

challenged and routed by the theory we now hold, that our earth is a subordinate member of one among many systems of stars. With their theory (and this was why they so stoutly defended it) they thought that they should lose their God, no longer accessible as of old, but driven into the dim spaces of infinity. The heaven which sat like a lid or cover upon the plain of the earth did indeed keep a unity, and hold things, and thoughts together; and when it was broken up, it was very natural for those men to suppose that no unity, no wholeness could again be wrought. Easily it cannot be wrought again, nor quickly. Not long ago men believed in what they called the Encyclopaedia of learning, or of knowledge, a rounded system of things known and to be taught, the Sum of Science. The progress of Science, and of the Sciences, broke up that theory as it presently destroyed the Ptolemaic system; in countless directions Science has advanced, but the lines of enquiry and of achievement have been not only multitudinous but divergent, pursued by separate groups of specialists, or perhaps by solitary explorers, and even when some attempt is made to gather the accumulations of many workers into a whole, it is found that no

one mind can grasp so great a multitude of facts. It has been well said that Science is in danger of being destroyed by the development and the success of the Sciences. For what the human mind needs is not knowledge but a key to knowledge; not facts, but the understanding of facts. True the disciplined mind will steel itself to wait for its final theory until all the facts have been collected and ascertained; but a beginning cannot be made without a hypothesis, without a working theory; and at present there are many who see no indication of an ultimate synthesis of the so numerous and so confusing details.

A young student may be pardoned if he feels what older students feel not less keenly, that he cannot find room in the theory, whatever it may have been, which once sufficed him, for the new facts which come to him as the results of his own labour or stream in upon him without his seeking for them. Of Latin, or history, or chemistry he was able to give an account which was useful (to him at any rate) and sufficient (again, for him) when he knew very little of any one of these subjects; but now that his knowledge is much increased that account is no longer sufficient or useful for him; and yet he

is unable to give, in its place, another account which will serve his purpose and befit the matter. When he was younger still, he could, though in words which satisfied no one but himself, yet give an account of himself with all his childish accomplishments and interests; but now he cannot unify himself any better than the subjects of his study, and still less bring himself and them both into a harmony.

"I am unable to perceive that the refinements of the intellect on any line of its development involve an ennobling or a strengthening of the human being." The sentence is taken from an Essay of J. A. Symonds* in which he discusses the meaning of culture.

Academic studies are supposed to refine the intellects, and all of us may presume, according to our capacity, to have received some refinement of our intellects from the studies we have pursued. But it is not always easy to relate these studies and the benefits which we have derived from them with the rest of our lives; and even if we believe that we are either the wiser or the happier for them, it is hard to say in what respect precisely we are wiser and

* *In the Key of Blue:* Culture: its meaning and uses, p. 208.

happier; and impossible to say with truth that we are wiser and happier than other people whom we know, the dearest, the best of men and women, who have had no tincture of the knowledge in which we are steeped. And yet we shall still press on with these studies, and seek, at the risk of attenuating, still further to refine our intellects. Mr Symonds may be able, and as we know he is able, for himself and so far as we can use his words for us also, to solve this problem. But how far can we justly use his words? and how are we equipped to find words for ourselves? Is the problem itself clear? I think I can put it in plain words: it is this—what is the good of all the various things that we do? and it is this: how are we to avoid being broken up into several or many different selves by the sharp urgency of the various things that we do? and it is this: how are we to draw together into a single view all the things that we know? These I hope are plain questions, but who is to answer them? They are to be answered by no better people than ourselves, and by each one for himself. We shall, of course, get what help we can from other and wiser people; they may have much to offer, yet we can only accept what we can understand.

With this caution I shall turn again to Mr Symonds—the passage which I last cited from him may have struck you with chilly apprehension. The passages to which I now direct your notice may bring you some encouragement. The first is this:

> When we enquire into the nature of religions, we shall find that they are all of them at root attempts to account for the universe, and to define man's place in the sphere of things*.

If this is true as I believe it is, we may be happily convinced that in their origin questions and problems which we are now apt to distinguish as being philosophical or historical or scientific are all one, and that they are not separate from the fundamental problem or question of religion itself. Again he writes:

> If we attempt to seize the main fact in the intellectual development of the last half century, we shall find that this may be described as the triumph of the scientific method in relation to all man's thought about the universe†.

It is a method as you know which had its origin in humanism and is now reinvigorating

* *Essays Speculative and Suggestive:* The Philosophy of Evolution, p. 2.

† *ib.* p. 1

the study of letters and of art. But I will not interrupt.

The whole scheme of things is now regarded as a single organism, advancing methodically through stages of its growth in obedience to inevitable laws of self-expansion*.

And to quote once more:

The tendency of scientific ideas, in so far as these are re-moulding thought in those high regions, is to spiritualise religion.....to emancipate the individual from egotism in the presence of that universal Being of which he is a part, and to the manifestation of which he contributes†.

To become "emancipated from egotism" is a long, and we may conceive, in some of its stages, a painful progress; yet we could not imagine any other condition on which man may discover the presence of a Universal Being, and to discover a Universal Being is of course to find oneself in that Being. To that process we have to commit ourselves, upon that long journey to make our way; as hopefully as we can, and of course with a stubborn confidence; yet we may tire or falter. The "Universal" may be everywhere, but seems to be very far off, and has a name which inclines

* *Essays Speculative and Suggestive:* The Philosophy of Evolution, p. 5.

† *ib.* p. 9.

us but little to affection. We know a better name; and when we try to trace the reasons of things, we look for a Divine Listener, or Disputant with whom we may reason. Yet Him, however named, we cannot always find. Us, however remote from an infinite destination, He overcomes in some rare moments with the unimaginable gift of His presence.

> Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!... Behold I go forward; but he is not there and backward; but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*.

I said that if, emancipated at last from Egotism, we make discovery of the Universal Being we must of necessity find ourselves in Him. Not less truly might it be said, and with a similar necessity of truth, that if we are to find Him at all we must find Him within ourselves.

Poetry comes nearest to the expression of what must surpass any one form of expression, and I shall beg you to listen to two poems which seem to me to set in imperishable form what is highest in human aspiration and

* Job xxiii. 3 seq.

achievement. The first was written by Emily Brontë. I need not quote the whole, for it must be well known to you; part of it I cannot but quote here:

O God, within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I,—undying life—have power in thee!
With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.
Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in thee.

The other poem, translated by Mr F. W. H. Myers*, "An oracle concerning the Eternal God," may be less familiar to you.

O God ineffable, Eternal Sire,
Throned on the whirling spheres, the astral fire,
Hid in whose heart thy whole creation lies,—
The whole world's wonder mirrored in thine eyes,
List thou thy children's voice, who draw anear,
Thou hast begotten us, thou too must hear!
Each life thy life her Fount, her ocean knows,
Fed while it fosters, filling as it flows;
Wrapt in thy light the star-set cycles roll,
And worlds within thee stir into a soul;

* *Hellenica*: Essay on Greek Oracles.

But stars and souls shall keep their watch and way,
Nor change the going of thy lonely day.
Some sons of time, our Father, King of Kings,
Rest in the sheen and shelter of thy wings,—
Some to strange hearts the unspoken message bear,
Sped on thy strength through haunts and homes of air—
Some where thine honour dwelleth hope and wait,
Sigh for thy courts and gather at thy gate;
These from afar to thee their praises bring,
Of thee, albeit they have not seen thee, sing;
Of thee, the Father wise, the Mother mild,
Thee in all children the eternal child,
Thee the first Number and harmonious whole,
Form in all forms, and of all souls the Soul.

CHAPTER III

MUCH of what I have said in the last two lectures is, I think, matter of general and even of universal agreement; but I am quite well aware that part of what I have said is not generally agreed, or at any rate is not universally agreed. Most people will agree—I think all people will agree, because they cannot help it, because the facts are too insistent and too evident—that all over the world and at all times men set in various circumstances have taken note of what has befallen them. They have found that various fortunes befell them and that from time to time, perhaps at rare intervals, perhaps more frequently, what has befallen them once has fallen to their lot again and again. They note these occurrences, they record them. But more than that, they try to explain what they see in the world and what they find in their own minds, and in the effort to explain they are driven to explore.

There come in upon their lives from some source, which they cannot see, influences which visibly affect them, and if they are to understand

what those influences are, they think, as they are bound to think, that they must seek for the causes of them. They note what happens, and they try to find out why it happens.

Religion, as I tried to show you, the word "Religion" means, according to some, a careful noting of things: the refusal to neglect them: it means according to others, the intelligent grouping and explaining of things, the attempt to trace them to a cause, and when that cause is found, if ever it is found, linking events together in recognized sequence, in a chain which is found also to bind, to lay an obligation, on those who have discovered it.

Now this understanding is sought by men for two reasons. One reason is this, that to be left in uncertainty is to be left in a state of discomfort; not to understand is to be anxious, to be troubled, to be in a perpetual pursuit of something which perpetually evades you. One reason, then, is a philosophical reason—the desire for understanding. But another reason, which I do not myself separate from that, you may call a practical reason. People want to know the cause of things in order to control them. They have noted that drought falls upon the land, or pestilence upon their cattle,

or disease upon themselves; or they have noted at other times that harvests are good, that the cattle are strong, that they themselves are in vigorous health, and every kind of prosperity. They are not contented with saying they do not know why these things are. They enjoy some of them, they suffer pain by reason of others. They think if they could get at the cause of either they would be able to control them, putting a stop to or minimising what they do not like and making constant or increasing what brings them happiness. Both of these reasons operate in the mind of man and stimulate him to enquiry—the philosophical reason and the practical reason. All that, I think, is matter of general agreement: I think that people, however much they might differ upon a hundred other topics, would agree upon that, because the records of mankind prove that that is so. In all ages, earliest and latest, man has thought and acted in that way. But what is not matter of general agreement—certainly not of universal agreement—is what I further claimed. Let us be clear what that was. Let us suppose, as I asked you earlier to suppose, that man in his efforts to explain and in his passion to explore, presses out beyond the bounds of what he can

see, beyond the limits of ordinary experience, into the dim region in which he can either only grope his way or not see at all, and that in that dusk or that blackness as of night, he is convinced (I do not know by what sense, I am not sure that you will say wisely, that it is by any one sense, but rather by a combination of his senses, by a general and heightened sensitivity, of his whole nature), convinced that he encounters there, not merely the cause, an impersonal thing for which he was looking, but something greater, something of another quality, something which arrests him in his search, something which, as he puts out his blind hands to take hold of it, seems and more than seems to take hold of him. If we make such a supposition as that, we must not expect everybody to agree with us. There are many people, as you know quite well, who will say that they are unable to follow us in such a supposition. Let us accept that fact for the moment, though we may regret it, and press our supposition still further. Let us suppose, as we very well may, that, checked, stopped, in his enquiry by such an encounter as I have described, man flies back in alarm, in mere terror—in terror that expresses itself even in the signs

and evidences of physical dread—into the hiding places of his own heart (away from the dark outside, beyond the edge and rim of clear experience), into the shelter of his own mind in order to escape from this thing that he has found, this something which is more than he was looking for: even there the more he penetrates the recesses of his own being, he will become the more certainly aware, as I believe, of something answering to that Power from which he tried to escape. Within himself he will find another than himself which there, where he thought he was safest, seizes him, fastens upon him and will not let him go. I have to carry the supposition further still. I have to say that this Power, this Influence, is of such a sort that we call it by a personal name, we call it a Person, we address it in such language as we have, and though it uses no audible words and has no language of common speech, it seems in its turn to address us and to speak to us, and whatever may be the form of words which we are accustomed to use to our fellows, whatever may be the language which in speaking to ourselves or to that Presence we employ—East or West, North or South—from whatever quarter we come, that Power speaks to us in a common

or universal language—it speaks as a person to a person. These three things I suppose. But I shall say again quite clearly, there are many persons who would not accept that theory, who would say it was foolish, mistaken, unwarranted. I think that there is a reply which you can make to such persons if you wish to reply to them, and I shall try presently to indicate what that reply is; but for the moment I leave them and it, and pass on to what concerns us more.

Anyone who discusses a subject is, I think, entitled, and in truth obliged to define it. Those who listen may find fault with the definition; and if so they can maintain their own opinion and if they think it is not worth while to listen longer, the remedy is in their own hands. But anybody who speaks must offer a definition of his subject, and I have already offered a definition of religion. Let me remind you of it. I said earlier that religion is belief in God and the practices, the mode of life, the conduct, which spring from it; and of religious instruction I said that it is instruction which has for its object to foster that belief and to promote and encourage the way of life, the practices, the conduct, which spring from it.

That may not be a good definition—I am very far from thinking it is a satisfactory definition (though I might support it by the authority of a great name[1]), but it is about religion so conceived that I am speaking. I could perhaps enforce the definition by saying that if, as I have imagined, man in his enquiries and explorations encounters such a Person as I have tried to suggest, the ultimate fact of human life is that a speech is possible and actually takes place between that Person and the human soul—the speech of man with God is the ultimate fact of religion. If you ask me how after saying that I should distinguish the practices, the conduct, the mode of life in which religion is expressed from religion itself, I should say that you are very welcome to have convicted me of an inconsistency. I should say I know quite well that practices in which this fact is expressed are all one with and inseparable from the fact itself. No language of whatever fine or varied a vocabulary will be adequate to express that fact. No mode of living in itself would suffice to body it out, but man will be the partial, but yet the best possible expression of it in the terms of his whole being. His conduct is the

[1] Frazer: *Magic Art*, I. p. 222 seq.

speech which he maintains with God; it is more than that, it is the interpretation of the speech which God holds with him. To be aware of oneself is to be aware of the boundaries, the limitations of oneself, and to be able in some measure to look beyond. When man looks beyond the boundaries of himself what does he look for? He looks for someone else like himself, but not himself. He seeks a likeness in difference. Sometimes he may find a likeness which is comforting to him or which attracts his ambition and his appetite. Sometimes he may find a difference which prompts his hostility. But whether for love or hate he is aware of other people than himself and enters into relations with them. He cannot do without them; he must have them. Why? Because he cannot maintain his own existence without them. He cannot be himself without being aware of himself and to be aware of himself is to be aware beyond himself of other beings. Now, whether it happened early, as some people suppose, or later as others believe, or whether it is a consummation towards which the human race is gradually tending you can suppose that the human family is become one; that many people, however numerous

they may be, are become a single community, a state, a society. Such a unity, such a society, can only exist upon the terms which make human life possible for the individual; and let me repeat what these terms are. Human life for the individual is only possible if the individual is aware of himself—that is the condition, that is the essence of the whole matter. I am I because I know that I am I, and I know that I am I because I know that I am not you. Now, make this group as large as you may, make it as wide as you may, make it embrace the whole human family spread over all lands, over all times—call it the Church Universal—give it whatever name in your judgment is the best name for embracing all members of our race, and so that all of them, all these people, so like ourselves, make one whole—what is the condition of that one whole existing? It is the condition upon which we as individuals exist, namely awareness of its being. But we must remember, to be aware of being is to be aware of the limitations of being—and to try to penetrate beyond the borders of our being into that "otherness," that "moreness" of which I have spoken, is an endless process. For the human imagination has not shrunk from the attempt

to describe what must ultimately baffle all description. How, if this process is endless can it be brought within the limits of any definition? You will say at once that it cannot. No definition can suffice, no formula remain fixed and permanent, but the fact remains that the human mind has always engaged itself with this question, and, we may conceive, always will.

Now, assuming that beyond the edge of the individual and beyond the uttermost limit of this unified human society of which I have spoken, there is the *Something* that we seek, there is the *Person* whom we seek; the tendency of human development is a tendency towards speech with that Something, with that Someone, and speech means understanding, and understanding means the realising of differences with the purpose of harmonising them. Suppose that at last, as the great good thing towards which we tend, a real speech were established either between the soul of an individual or the soul of a people or all peoples, and this Power which transcends us: then at last we should have arrived at an understanding —we should be speechless, because there would be nothing to be said, there would be

nothing ever to be explained, there would be nothing further to be desired. To anyone who said:—

> There is not much advantage in talking about that, because in the nature of the case it is beyond all human experience; we have not arrived at that,

we might reply that it is worth while to speak of that because we already have something which is a foretaste of it, or a forecast of it, or an anticipation which we may legitimately make of it. From time to time, it may be in the stress of severe physical pain, or in the sweet and almost poignant relief which comes when pain is assuaged, or in the height of mental sorrow, or, once more, in the recovery from sorrow; it may be in swimming in the sea, or lying on a hillside under the sun; it may be in waking or falling into healthy sleep; it may be after eating or drinking; it may be after abstinence;—upon whatever occasions—and they are as various as human beings are various—the fact is that from time to time and in whatever circumstances there fall upon the human spirit moments, periods—short or prolonged—in which a perfect tranquillity is arrived at, in which there is an ineffable peace, in which for a timeless hour wrongs are adjusted, differences

are composed, troubles are soothed and the mind is at one with itself, because it is absorbed in what is more than itself, because it goes beyond its limits into the universe, and into its limits there stream the forces which keep worlds upon worlds together. If that happens once, for a moment, it is a fact. Mere continuance does not increase the value of proof or afford evidence of truth. Such an experience if once granted to a human mind is its own evidence—it is the evidence of the possibility that this oneness, this unity, can be achieved, and it is a unity in which whatever is most characteristic of the person or the people—because it falls upon whole peoples sometimes, this moment of sudden and undeserved tranquillity and repose—stands out in greatest clearness. There are some who suppose a calm mind is like a clean slate with everything wiped out; it is the ideal of a bovine stupidity; but that is not what I am trying to describe. I am trying to describe a condition when the mind is at highest tension and most like itself, and for that very reason bound to be most unlike other minds: and yet (because, not in spite, of this difference) is harmonised, both with itself, and with other minds, and brought into conscious

union with the surrounding influences, with the supreme Person in whom all persons are gathered, and yields without losing its own quality.

Now, let us go back to the critics (of whom I was speaking just now) who are unwilling to make this supposition with us. I think your answer to them is a very simple one. Your answer to them is this, that what you have been claiming is a great hypothesis; your working theory, an assumption which you make, and that you cannot prove the truth of your assumption to other persons except upon the condition upon which you proved it to yourself, namely that they make the assumption too. You cannot convince another that what you taste and enjoy is good if he refuses to taste and enjoy it. But the difficulty is not disposed of by that. Suppose they say to you that they are glad to hear that you are candid enough to admit that all this is a hypothesis—it is your hypothesis, a very pleasant hypothesis, very comforting and even useful, "but" they will go on, "it will break down; it maintains you now, but not for ever will it maintain you." What answer is there to that? The only answer to that is the answer which courage

draws from the heart of love, namely, that you will risk it. One can and ought to try to anticipate the results of experience. You must make your risk and then see whether the risk has been justified. You cannot get the justification first and make the risk afterwards—there would be no risk. Now, faith is a venture—the faith which we repose in other people, the faith we repose in ourselves, the faith we repose in God. And a man who says to himself,

I will have my proof first, and repose my faith afterwards,

is a man who is saying he will do what is impossible. But we have to be quite honest with ourselves about that.

We have to realise there is a risk. We cannot conceive any other explanation of the world than what has been granted to us in such moments as I have described; but if that were to be a beautiful dream—well at any rate, we have had our dream. But my point is that a hypothesis made once is a hypothesis to be made again and again; it is not a certainty in advance; you leap in the dark, and all leaps that are worth taking are in the dark; whether you arrive upon a jagged rock, or a pitiless sea, or in a haven where you would be, remains to

find out, and a courageous man, whether religious or scientific, or scientific and religious both, makes that venture: and if a hypothesis often made and confirmed induces security, he finds new exercise for his courage by making a new and still bolder venture.

Perhaps what you are mainly occupied in considering is the teaching of religion, and you may very well say that it is not for me to talk about the nature of religion—you would like me to give you some advice as to how to teach it. In trying to speak about the nature of it, as it seems to be to my own mind, I am saying what seems to be essential about the teaching of it; because, consider, to teach is to convey straight from your heart and mind into the heart and mind of other people knowledge which, having been acted upon and tested, knowledge, upon which much and not less indeed than your whole self having been staked, has become a passion and a belief—that is what I mean by teaching—it is not "twice two," it is not the date of a play, and the use of the globes, it is not the Kings of Israel and Judah: those things have their place—the critical thing is what a man believes—believes as the result of trial at the point where belief, having been

tested by experience and based upon knowledge, has become a burning conviction—it is the sum total of himself.

So, if I speak of religion, and the teaching of religion I am speaking of one and the same subject. If people are agreed about the nature of religion they will not quarrel, though they may differ, about modes of teaching it.

What is a religious man? A man who has this belief, who has made his venture upon this belief, not once or twice, but day by day, and hour by hour, who has risked the things he sees for the sake of the things he does not see—the safe for the unsafe, the paying for the things that do not pay, the tangible for the intangible—that is the religious man. What is he? He has a high strung nature and irritable nerves, and a sharp tongue—he has a thousand faults, but he has got, with all that, a fund of tranquillity which nothing destroys. He may go from extremes of joy to extremes of sadness—he is not overturned by either. He is like a well balanced ship which, tossed by the waves, will not turn right over because it has ballast. At the heart of emotion, however varied, he has tranquillity—that is one of the marks of a religious person.

Another of his marks is this: he is persistent. He will be baffled, discouraged, tormented with the opposition of the world and the inconsistencies of his own nature, but he will go on and on, and he will still go on. He counts in the long run because his influence is persistent. That, I think, is another mark of the religious man. If you tell me that your business is to teach religion, I should say, "Be religious, maintain this tranquillity, keep this persistence."

Another word for the same quality is Power.

A religious person is a man who carries the conviction to other minds, not I dare say, in all he does, but in the main tenor of what he does, that he is somehow representative—he is himself, of course, but he is representative of more than himself. He speaks with the tradition of all truly religious people behind him; he speaks with the weight of their authority. He has penetrated into lonely places, which are yet, as he finds, strangely inhabited by other lonely creatures like himself, held together in communion with a presence of which his life becomes the imperfect, but the tranquil, the persistent and in its persistent tranquillity, the invincible, witness.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION, then, is belief, and belief is a venture of faith, a hypothesis. If that is of the essence of its nature, it can only keep its nature if it keeps its essence, that is to say, if it always remains a hypothesis. A working hypothesis is a hypothesis which is put constantly to a further test. Day by day, hour by hour, you put it to trial, not knowing in advance if it will stand the strain which you impose upon it. Now, the danger is for us, and not only in this supreme and universal subject of which I am speaking, but in less important and more partial matters, to destroy the value of a hypothesis by treating it as if it were a certainty. We say—"I have made my experiment and it was successful. I put this or that theory to trial and it did not fail me; I will be content with that; I will not go back upon it"—which is very well, but, we add—"I will not go forward beyond it"—which is a very different thing. If a man changes what has been a working hypothesis into a fixed formula he destroys its meaning, and by destroying its meaning robs it of any

use for himself. You can see what I mean by looking round you, or perhaps still better by looking at yourselves. People come very quickly to have a convention of thought represented pretty well by conventional words which they always use. You know what they will say: they will repeat what they have said before; in charity you may declare that you know what they will think; but the truth is they have ceased to think. They have become the slaves of a formula, they have converted their hypothesis, their active belief, into a convention.

These conventions have many, various forms. Many people wear their religion like a cockade in their hats—their badge of servitude; and there are other people who keep theirs with their wills in safes against their death. They have made formulae of their beliefs—tokens, emblems, or legal documents. There are people who fall into the same mistake, but by a prettier process which I shall try to describe. You know how in spring the plants in the garden put forth very tender tissues which cover a still softer bud with a sensitive framework, but wait a few weeks or a few months and you find this soft covering has become a hard protective rind. Something like

that happens, I think, with human beings. In youth it may be, in their spring whenever that comes upon them, in youth or in later life—for to some men as to some countries spring comes on halting steps—they put out tendrils, fibres, a tissue about their heart, a tissue which draws to their heart whatever is subtlest and most sublime in the world; but soon you find that what happened to the plants has happened to them; they have grown indeed in bulk, but this gentle, soft, transparent veil with which they covered themselves has become a hard coat, a coat of mail, impenetrable, and then they grow no more. They too have turned a hypothesis, a working belief, into a formula.

Religion should be worn in the heart; and even that is a dangerous counsel because some people will wear their hearts upon their sleeves. It is a distressing sight but not uncommon; as you grow older you get used to it, and do not wince at it, but children, you may imagine, are aghast at that, and I think we ought to be very careful—especially if our business brings us into daily communication with children and puts us much within their sight,—not to affront their modesty by exhibiting our hearts upon our sleeves. The heart ought to be within

and hidden from sight; it ought to be the root of a life and religion its sap, or essence, the vital principle within it, expressing itself outwardly, in action, in conduct, in behaviour, in manner, but itself hidden.

To-day I attempt to be what is called "practical." I am talking more definitely about the teaching of religion; and the first point I wish to make is this: if you have religion hide it, if you possess it, keep it within you; do not wear it in your hat. On the other hand, do not let your reserve be of such a kind as will make you stifle it in a strong box; do not let it become a mere formula, a rind, a husk; a husk is a hard thing and it may be an empty one; and if you keep your religion (as you should) in your heart do not wear your heart upon your sleeve.

Let me begin again. If the religious spirit is a spirit of perpetually renewed venture, the attitude of the religious person is that of an athlete, trained for a race which is for ever to begin; and when one race is done, prepared for the next: the muscles tense and wrought to hardness by their strained intensity, the figure on the stretch, but finely balanced, ready for movement. It seems to be in perfect repose, and so indeed it may be after practice; but it

takes much practice to attain repose of that kind, the repose of stillness.

Reserve, then, is what I suggest to you; reserve for your own sake, and in consideration of the comfort of other people—the people you are to teach; for their sake as well as for your own I think it is important for you to keep a very strict guard upon yourself and to maintain an equable and athletic repose.

And once more I must begin again and take you back to our starting point. If religion is a belief, and if it is a belief which is strengthened by continued and prolonged experience, it seems to be something intimate and personal, something your own, and not of anybody else, something so much your own indeed that you cannot communicate it. You express your belief by what you do, but the belief itself—can you communicate that?

Here again I give you a caution. If you have great fluency of speech; check it. It is very much better to say less than you mean than more than you mean upon most subjects and particularly about this subject. But you may say "that is not my difficulty." You may not be aware in yourselves of fluency in speech—perhaps in fact you do not possess it. No

matter; you may be all the better without it. But suppose your estimate of your power of speech is justified by truth not less than by modesty, how are you to teach this thing that lies at your heart and about which you can find no words even to satisfy yourself? I shall have something to say presently about teaching, but before we go on to think about teaching, I shall ask you to consider what happens to ourselves and within ourselves. We find springing up within us some emotion, and this emotion stirs us to activity, to conduct, and the result of that is two-fold. The emotion, not yet expressed in activity or conduct is a disturbing thing; we must get rid of our emotion, must let it have expression; and when we have achieved expression, we have arrived at a peace we did not possess before. I give a simple example. Imagine a little child bubbling over with some information he wants to give to you, and unable to express himself; he is quite literally in pain with the thing he wants, but is unable, to express; and if you know him well enough—if you are a teacher and know your business—you give him for his emotion the words he cannot give himself, you relieve him of his emotion by so doing, and you restore to

him tranquillity. Not "restore" which means to give back; no, you give him a tranquillity which he did not possess before—a tranquillity of a deeper nature, of a higher sort. You have given himself back to himself, but himself ennobled, partly by the stir of the emotion which was his and partly by this supervening peace which comes when the emotion has expressed itself. That is one point. The other is this. The expression of an emotion not only draws upon the mind the tranquillity which I attempted to indicate but it deepens the fount of emotion itself. Let us imagine emotion springing from some well; the well is deeper and stronger when the emotion has been expressed than before. There is the peace which as I have said comes from the relief that utterance gives, but below that and as the reason and cause of it there is this deepening of the source from which the expression sprang.

Let me put this in simpler words. When you have expressed a belief you hold it more strongly than before. When you have said a thing—if you have said it as sincerely as you can and as well as you can, trying not to go beyond what is your real meaning, not at any point to transgress the truth—

then you believe what you believed before more firmly, more passionately, than you did earlier.

But here we come upon what is more important still. When you now, having sincerely expressed yourself, believe what you did believe more firmly and passionately than before, by the increased intensity of your belief you have enlarged the thing in which you did believe. Let us suppose a man has a belief in truth and honour, and upon a great occasion, or what is more severe a test, upon the little and apparently negligible occasions of daily life, he expresses his belief in truth and honour well, sincerely, and even, as I put it just now, passionately. Having done that, he believes in truth and honour more firmly than he did before; but because he believes in these things more firmly than he did before, he has given to these ideas, truth and honour, a significance, a range, a width, a validity, which before they did not possess. Truth and honour are now for him, and for the world, larger things than before he expressed his belief in them. Emotion calls for the outward form, and the outward form gives a new significance and a wider range to the feeling of which it was the embodiment.

Now, at that point, as you will at once see, a very real danger arises. I shall speak of the danger first of all as it affects ourselves, and afterwards as it affects other people whom we may attempt to teach.

First of all, then, as it touches ourselves. Suppose we know, as we must know very well, that certain feelings of ours express themselves in a manner which is pleasant to us, because natural, and sincere and in a way which gives us relief. Suppose we know further, what I have just been trying to show, that this expression in conduct heightens or deepens the emotion itself. Let us keep those two points in mind. It is very tempting for us, to revive the expression because we enjoy it so much. We like the act which in the first place was prompted by an emotion, and may try to go back from the expression to the emotion instead of going forward from the emotion to the act. That is not always an illegitimate thing to do, but I say that it is a dangerous thing to do. I will give you some instances.

Suppose that in a moment of wonder a man casts his eyes up to the ceiling. If we were sure that he did that, without deliberate artifice, without acting,—we might say that was a very

natural thing; he did it, we should say, because he was surprised, he was wondering. But, he might induce in himself the feelings of wonder by adopting the expression, or the attitude of wonder, or he might be merely posing. That may be a legitimate thing to do or not; it depends upon considerations which I shall ask you to weigh.

When you were children you were probably taught to kneel down and fold your hands and shut your eyes to say your prayers. It is very probable that you had not any prayers to say. It is very probable that prayers were said over your head by your nurses, or mothers, or fathers. You were ready to go to bed; but before sleep was allowed to come pleasantly to your happily tired eyelids this ceremony was to be gone through. Why? You did not take that attitude because of the devotion that was in your heart. No; you were put into that attitude by other people because they hoped that the attitude of your body would prompt a devotion in your heart. Probably they were quite right. But they may not have been; and even if they were quite right, you may have made it quite wrong. Suppose I put myself into such an attitude, I may think that I am

engaged in supplication when I am not. I may think that I am doing a real thing from my heart when I am only posturing.

I am quite sure there are many people now of middle age who quite sincerely regret that in their childhood they were accustomed so thoroughly and so constantly drilled to forms of politeness or forms of religious observance not because forms of politeness are not appropriate for feelings of courtesy; not because forms of religion are not appropriate for religious emotion; but because the forms minus the feelings, maintained without the feelings, tend to check for the future the feelings which should be there. There are many people who are dulled in their religious sense by the practice of religious exercises. And yet you will go back to your schools and at once you will gather your pupils with you to various religious exercises; they will say religious words, they will sing hymns, they will kneel and repeat prayers; they will hear from you and take in with their ears the accustomed words. All these are forms and excellent forms. It may be that they are forms which will produce in those who hear them the feelings you desire. But they may have the opposite effect. That is a real danger—

more than a danger: it is a thing which often happens. And suppose that, not being a parent and knowing intimately what I am risking, but being merely a teacher, who does not know always quite so intimately what a child is like —suppose, to put it brutally—I am merely an official teacher, a person who for so many hours in the day has command over children, and I put them into attitudes of devotion. I may, of course, by making them take and take again and again such an attitude, suggest to their heart the feeling which the attitude should really express; or I may be cutting off the feeling at its very root; I may be making the idea and the practice of prayer quite unreal to them.

An example which is less damaging, but yet immeasurably damaging, because it is an injury to sincerity, may be offered. Let us suppose that some music, some poetry, some picture, has won and kept the admiration of the world. You are a teacher; let us suppose that the feeling of the world for any one of these things is not merely mimicked and echoed by you but deeply felt, honestly shared and suitably expressed. You would like your pupils to know this music, this poetry, this picture. How do you teach it to them? You may tell

them what the critics have said, the best critics—I mean the critics who put their feelings into just and apt words—and you may put your own feelings, either repeating what the critics say, or in better because more appropriate words of your own for yourself, and teach your pupils what you say that you think, or what other persons more authoritative and venerable than yourselves have said that they thought about the work of art, whatever it may be; and before you can turn round, before you can help yourself or them, you will find that your pupils are saying what you have said, what the critics have said—saying it again and again. And by this repetition of other people's sentiments, so sincere as they were in the beginning, and so plausibly uttered now, with so pleasant an artifice which feigns nature so well, they will be building up a wall, a barrier, between them and any vital appreciation of the thing you want them to enjoy. And if that is so in any of the ordinary subjects of instruction, it is a danger which threatens us not less but more in this matter with which we are now concerned. You need to be careful how you speak at all about it, for fear that by saying again and again what you

meant once you may destroy the reality of your original feeling, and by getting your pupils to say again and again what you felt once but what they have *never* felt you may prevent them from ever arriving at the truth.

What is the remedy? You must never say the same thing twice, because you can never feel the same thing twice. A man feels and expresses himself, but the expression of that first emotion changes the value and enlarges the scope of the emotion itself.

A man who can say the same thing twice is a man who has ceased to feel.

Now, I am not supposing that there may not be a very great deal of similarity and even of repetition, as you pass week after week, term after term, and, when you are older, year after year, in the business of teaching. Of course there will be. You will be the same person, but as years will have brought you weight and authority, or, what years sometimes give to happy natures, new delicacy and resiliency, so they must have brought to your feelings weight and authority, and fineness and buoyancy, and old words, worn thin, will reveal a larger meaning.

Nothing is more disconcerting to the teacher

than to arrest himself saying with precisely the same meaning what he said a week ago or a year ago; and nothing is more disastrous than that kind of repetition when he is trying to teach religion.

Now, all this seems to point to the moral that you should not teach religion at all. It does not. It points to this. If you are a religious person you cannot help teaching religion; you are doing it all the time, perhaps without knowing it, but perhaps consciously, deliberately. I think there is only one good excuse for teaching, and it is this, that you have for the thing which you want to teach so strong an affection and in it so fervent a belief that you cannot be silent about it, and for the people whom you have to meet in the course of your business so kindly a feeling—a feeling so intimate of kindred and of affection—that you cannot help talking to them about the things you care for. That is the only excuse for teaching. Otherwise all teaching is an intrusion. Why should you disturb the placid lives of children, why should you disturb the gaiety of youth, by telling the children or youths things you do not care much for, while all the time you do not care much for your unwilling list-

eners? But upon the other terms there is an excuse—more than an excuse—justification, and reason.

Now, if I enjoy a thing and am fond of my friends, I should like them to share what I enjoy. I do not press it upon them, but my enjoyment suffers a diminution if they will not join in it: an enhancement, if they will.

That is the excuse for teaching. Upon any other terms you are giving people words instead of things, formulae instead of the substance of belief. Now, the substance of belief is always an intangible thing; what you offer eludes both the hand that tries to give and the hand that tries to take, and each hand finds itself grasping the other.

You know what Wordsworth says about poetry. He says that poetry has its origin in emotion remembered in tranquillity. I have tried to describe the tranquillity that I mean—the tranquil poise of the trained athlete, of the spirit that is in training, fasting, it may be, hard set, lean and alert. The religious spirit is always an ascetic spirit, ascetic in its pleasures, taking its pleasures as part of its training; punishing itself, but enjoying itself too; but always looking to an invisible goal. What set you in

that attitude of search? What put you upon that movement? It was an emotion. But while emotion is hot within you, while it is stirring within you, it is not clear, it is not lucid, it is not controlled. We express ourselves in conduct in order to give shape to emotion, and so to control, to turn and bend it to our purposes. When we have got it as we say "in hand" then we can look back upon the emotion in tranquillity; and that is the creative moment. Poetry is an act of creation. Poetry is achieved when the mind, having suffered emotion and won tranquillity, shapes for itself a new form, and so transmutes belief into something nobler than it was before. Religious teaching has this poetic, creative, quality.

Seeing is believing. If your pupils see you occupied with an idea, held by it, struggling with it, finding, as at last you must find, repose in it; adjusting yourself to it, balancing yourself with it, and then discovering for it the just expression, and looking back upon that time of turmoil when the idea was invading your mind—looking upon that in tranquillity—if they see you so engaged, they will not be unmoved by that spectacle.

But again there is a danger to note: people,

who want to be sincere and honest (in their effort to be sincere and honest and not to overstate themselves) understate; they say, not more than they mean, but deliberately less than they mean. They put their experience and conviction too low. Or it may be that they defraud themselves of power in their work by shutting themselves off from the sources of power in moments which might be for them moments of inspiration.

I gave you the illustration just now of a town held at last by an invading force, and that is the imagery in which men have spoken of the oncoming of God upon the human spirit—as a thing to be dreaded, as a thing which provokes resistance. We dread the thing we hope for, and we fear the thing we cherish. But sometimes, it may be, a rare serenity overtakes the mind. This force, which seemed likely to threaten our existence, likely to sweep over us like a wave of the sea, presents itself to us in a different form—as a very gentle breath, as a kindly spirit, as a genial influence, which may come not less softly than powerfully upon the mind and invade the human spirit with rest. Sometimes, not often, but at some rare points in his life a man may do well to throw himself

open to such an incursion of divine influences; he need not always seek them: they are always about him, but sometimes he might deliberately throw himself open to them, or even set forth to seek them. Eleven months of the year we spend our time in these streets, in these classrooms; but sometimes we go away to the sea, to the hills, to the country. We have been breathing all the time, but then we breathe consciously; with an active pleasure, and more deeply than is our wont.

CHAPTER V

WHEN I come to think over what I have said it seems to me that what I have done is to show you how very difficult a task it is upon which you are or presently will be engaged. It is worth while for those of you who are beginning to realise that these difficulties exist.

What is to be done? I think this is to be done. Let your pupils see in your school, or in your classroom, and in your own practice, a process going on; a process in which one person, or a community of people, by habit and of set purpose at regular times, repeats acts of worship, and says over and over again words of prayer. Do not ask them too eagerly to join in your rites. Let them be spectators. Let them watch. Let them be at a distance and see what it is that older people do. If you as an older person are talking to your contemporaries about subjects that matter, subjects that hold, interest and deeply move you, and there are younger people in your presence: the younger people cannot but be impressed by the fact which they may not understand—that

you are held, governed, swayed, by interests which for the moment at any rate wholly escape them. I do not think there is anything that moves people more strongly than that—the sight, the recognition, of the holding of other human spirits by interests which at the time may elude the spectators. They want to know what it is about, this conversation of yours, what it is that has touched you so nearly, what it is which, touching you at a moment, as it does, with a poignant emotion, yet seems after the immediate emotion has passed still to govern and control you—they want to know what that is. Much more profoundly will they be moved if they conjecture or are convinced that your conversation is with an unseen listener and speaker. Allow your pupils to be the spectators of that great transaction as it goes on. What is that transaction? It is what I described earlier when I spoke of religion as the speech maintained between man and God. If your pupils, not able for the moment to conduct that speech for themselves, or to share it with you and the partner of your sublime conversation, are yet smitten by the sight of you, engaged in that transaction, then I think that they will have learnt something.

But there is more than that. If I speak about religion as the speech of man with God, I may also speak about it as the speech of God with man. Now, more profound than the effect of words partly heard and dimly understood is the impression made upon an onlooker as he watches someone whose own words he may hear, but cannot hear words which are given in reply. You are speaking and your pupils may hear you; but you are listening and they do not hear the ineffable word which reaches your spirit. They see you under the spell of it, catching it perhaps faintly, or stirred to your depths by it, but itself they do not hear. They are then spectators—not as at a play, called in to hear the conventional utterance of your emotions, but as in the sense in which those who live with you are spectators of your life—not always deliberately watching you, but none the less, the conscious witnesses of an operation in which you are a partner, an operation in which there is another partner, felt, guessed, but not seen by them. I believe that that might convey to children the suggestion of the reality of religion, of a speech being maintained by man with God, and what is more to the point and the purpose, maintained by God

with man. I think that they will want to join in that speech; they will want to know what its significance is. As they catch some of its words they will want to catch others, so that words will pass into sentences and sentences into the history of the human spirit at large; because always, I believe, where a man entertains this conversation he passes beyond himself, and the language he uses is the language of all time and of all people. He will be swept up into the great convention of the world—the world looking to its God and speaking to Him. It is a stream, irresistible, which carries from the banks those who look and watch and marvel at its progress. They learn to speak at last the great language that has swept them from their isolation and made them articulate.

It is in some such way as that that I should read, if I had to read, passages from the Bible to children. There you may act a little more easily. They are not your words except so far as you can make them your own; but it is very seldom your business to interpret. The passion for explaining wrecks many good teachers and many good lessons.

When you are young, you know so much, and you know so much that is near the surface;

and you know so much which is immediately interesting, that it is very difficult for you not to say all you know. Do not give your pupils too much information. Be very sparing of your knowledge, do not tell your pupils too much: rather let them hear, as you read, the words which men of old time said to their God, and what they believed God said to them; because that is what you find in the Bible; let them be seized by the amazing fact that that conversation was held. The book is in your hands: read it as well as you can—with detachment; not stressing, not emphasising and not too much explaining. Then again they will be witnesses; they will hear, or rather they will overhear, this utterance exchanged between man and God. A writer who loves a fine distinction has said that the difference between poetry and prose is this—that whereas prose is heard, poetry is overheard; it is not addressed to an audience. Now, all religious utterance is of kindred with poetry. It is not addressed to an audience; it is addressed by a man to his Maker, and if other people become aware of it at all it is because they are permitted to overhear; it is not for them; and it is only with a kind of timidity, a bashfulness, which may pass at last into a

sacred awe, that they will hear it at all. Suppose as you passed by a door you heard a man saying his prayers. You would be horror-struck at your own impiety; but if you hear twenty men saying their prayers, you are apt to think they are a religious crowd, and may thoughtlessly and noisily join them. That is not what you ought to do, or to encourage in your pupils. If you can get the impression in your school of a number of people each offering up his private prayer, then he who overhears will be smitten with a kind of shame, until at last, if ever, he finds that what they say he desires to say too.

Religious teaching is the gift of religion, made by those who have the root, the seeds of it, and will plant and foster them. It can be achieved by those who will pay the price. And here I venture upon counsel. I do not know that at all periods of history this would have been wise or necessary counsel to offer, though on that I shall have a comment to make in a moment: but I am quite sure that at this particular period of history in which we live, when most people are in danger of becoming gross with a superfluity of possessions—I mean money and what money buys, chairs and

tables and houses and clothes, and what is not less deadening to the spirit, a superfluity of knowledge (imagination boggles at the multitude of things young people know),—their possessions, whether of mere things or of knowledge, blunt their sensibility. There are many people who would have a finer sense in literature, for instance, if they knew less about it; who would know more music if they had heard less; if they had read and heard less and thought more and allowed time and opportunity for feeling. The purification of feeling is what is wanted; the deepening of the intellectual root and the fining of sensibility—those are things which are wanted; and those results are only attained by people who will pay the price which is necessary for them.

What is the price? The price is a rigid asceticism, a self-imposed self-denial. I think that from time to time, according to their habits and customs, but all the more for those in whose particular grouping in the world such habits and customs do not prevail—it is good for people to put themselves into training, and to do without things they would like—to go hard; to have too little for a day or two to eat; to

spend less on what we are apt to regard as innocent indulgences—in some real way, to punish the body. Now, I do not mean that in a merely negative sense, but in the positive sense I indicated a moment ago when I said we must put ourselves in training. Men who go into athletic training give up a great many things they like; they keep rigid hours, they have a rigid diet, they run hard, they row hard, they get rid of their grossness, until at last, grossness having disappeared, real strength emerges—strength finely outlined, strength well poised, strength perfectly adjusted to the purpose they have in view. If that is necessary for the body, it is not less necessary for the mind. Consider whether it may not be wise for you to subject yourself to some such discipline. If there is a choice for you between a cheap and an expensive way of doing things, sometimes choose the expensive way; if there is a choice for you between doing a thing easily and hardly, sometimes do it in the hard way. If you have the opportunity of saving yourself and resting yourself, or on the other hand of squandering yourself and fatiguing yourself, sometimes squander yourself. Let yourself go upon exercises that will cause you pain. I do not think there is any other way of

arriving at what we all want, namely, intellectual grasp and fineness of feeling.

I said a moment ago, as you will remember, that at some periods of our history that advice might not have been wisely given, because there have been times in our history when people have been more ready to put themselves upon hard training than they are now. If you look back, those of you who are historians, you will find that precisely at such periods when the custom of men was to inflict upon themselves hardship, they were the most ready to add to what was customary some fresh burden. It is the people who are in hard training who will train harder, and the people who are in no training who allow themselves new indulgences. You should from time to time prefer the painful and expensive to the easy and cheap alternative.

The other and the last thing I have to say to you is this. I can bring you to it by calling to your mind a very familiar passage of Wordsworth. You remember his phrase about the vacant and pensive mood—

> For oft, when on my couch I lie
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude.

Now, a look of vacancy often falls upon eyes which are not really intelligent. In teaching you may have noticed sometimes a look which you call vacant upon the faces of your pupils. I have not infrequently had that experience myself. The mind seems to have become as we say a blank; it is a hollow space from which you cannot even strike an echo. That of course is not what Wordsworth means or advocates when he talks about the "vacant mood," he means something quite different. He means the mood of a man who has emptied his mind of what is irrelevant; who has turned out of his mind the things that do not matter, the things which block it and choke it and encumber it, the things which are in fact of second-rate importance, though they may hitherto have seemed of first-rate importance.

Take the least difficult instance.

Suppose your mind were full of pleasant images, generous thoughts and laudable aspirations, and then in a moment of sudden and rare illumination you felt that the best you had was as nothing compared with something else of which you now perceived; and you determined that you would empty your mind of all you had at the extreme risk either of becoming bank-

rupt or of being replenished from a divine source. You would be engaged in an act of religion, an act of faith; you would be risking these good hopes, these high aspirations, these pleasant sentiments, for the chance of something supreme. The vacant mood that Wordsworth recommends and says that he himself sometimes attained is the mood of a mind which has been deliberately emptied at that great risk. You throw away your best in the hope that something beyond all comparison, beyond all measure, better may occupy it. But that vacant mood is also a pensive mood; that effort of renunciation is made by thought.

You might put all that in another way. The religious mood, the religious temper, is the mood or temper of expectancy sustained against constant disappointment. A man who expects to encounter God will often go bitterly cold and disappointed home. But once, it may be, in a long life, once and again, perhaps, for a very happy man, more often, the disappointment may be done away, the expected sight may come, and he will know through the long periods of succeeding disappointment that the great thing has happened to him. But the disappointments will recur. Read what has been

recorded either by themselves or by others of the most religious people that the world has known, of the saintliest of saints, of the people whose "conversation" as we say seems to have been most continually in heaven—you will find that those people more than any others have been aware of these dull periods, unillumined tracts, where, to their straining eyes the remembered vision has been denied. But they have not ceased to look for it.

That is a main part of the practice of religion.

It may be that for some temperaments the great thing that I have spoken of is granted comparatively often, or it may be not; but whatever your temperament may be the practice of religion consists in holding with stubborn cheerfulness to the belief in the transcendent vision during the long spaces in which the vision is not granted. And yet when it comes, as come it may, as come it will, unexpectedly, unforeseen, ravishingly as a summer wind upon a cold day, or like the bright light of a star shining unsought and marvellous through the roof of a dark wood—wherever it comes, to believe in it, in its reality for all its rareness—that is the practice of religion.

Children, at any rate, know quite certainly who are the people whose eyes have once beheld this thing and who have not. They may be accustomed to your familiar and even amusing frailties; they may know your faults, they may be hurt, often, by you; but they will not mistake you if this mark has been set upon you. They will not doubt your utterance if ever your tongue has been touched by this fire, nor ever will they mistake the gleam of eyes once smitten by unimaginable light.

THE SIMPLE AND THE GOOD

POSTSCRIPT

For the simple and the good, the very simple and the very good, the world has a pleasant unity which accords with their happy temper. Some of these amiable spirits, we are ready to believe, have never known strife and confusion within themselves or witnessed them in the world. Others, perhaps more to be envied, seem to have had, long ago, some knowledge, held and transfigured now in memory, of disappointment or of pain; they were once sensitive to the mockery of fortune, to the bewildering discomfiture of ruined hopes; but now looking back upon the very things which then provoked lamentation as they gave its edge and poignancy to distress, they see them with other eyes, not duller, but rather touched by the healing fingers of Time to a keener and a juster vision: where once they found wretched failure or ugly mischance they discover now, in retrospect, an ordered completeness, a mellow and satisfying beauty.

And if their world has a rounded and serene unity, it is not the object merely of their de-

lighted contemplation; it is all one with that unity which is themselves. They are more than reconciled, they are mated, with their world, conscious only of the permanent and pervasive felicity of an alliance in which the partners—themselves and their world—are, in effect, identified.

And we, we others, the attentive spectators of a mode of life which is not ours, must not disturb them with inquiry, or beg leave to know their secret from their own lips. But we may question ourselves, and try to understand what we see. Here then are people, disconcertingly like ourselves, who have had no acquaintance with trouble; and here are others again (and these surely not less awake our wonder) who have—not passed (for to say that is to do justice neither to them nor to the truth) but—re-interpreted what once was, or seemed, harsh and alien and rendered it consonant and kindred with their present total of serene well-being.

We ask ourselves whether their world is ours, the very same, in which we so uncomfortably and disconsolately, so grudgingly and awkwardly move, or quite a different world. If we put our question impatiently we may give ourselves a rough and ambiguous answer in the

form of a dilemma; we may say if their world is the same as ours, then, either they, interpreting it happily, interpret it right, and our account is wrong; or else they are mistaken. But a dilemma is an uncomfortable seat even for those who can adroitly place themselves between its horns; and there is a further difficulty, for it is clear that the interpretation makes the world, or at least enters as an element into its structure and composition, and those therefore who give a different interpretation by that very act make for themselves a world different from that of their neighbours. So if we and they are speaking of different worlds (though the difference be constituted *only* by the varying interpretation) we need not marvel that their story is different from ours. Here at once a fresh question arises. Is the world in which these people live *all* the world that they might have had, or only a part of that? The whole world certainly it cannot be, if our own world, being real, is yet excluded from it; but is it all the remainder, apart from our own? Is it even as much of the remainder as might, but for some deliberate choice of limitation, have been theirs?

An artist, from the large world, selects what

he wants; mere emphasis, a point of view taken, a preference indulged, is for him a sort of selection; but he selects in a more literal sense; he takes what he wants and refuses to take all else, both for his subject and for his material. And whether he takes much or little, it is his business to make a whole of that; we may not like what he has chosen for his subject, the materials which he employs may be unfamiliar or unpleasant to us, but if he achieves what he has set himself to achieve, then he may well do without our admiration, or indeed compel it by a success, which gives us no pleasure other than that which we receive from witnessing the exact and full accomplishment of a set purpose. And yet here a reservation is to be made. A critic may find that the perfection, which he cannot but admit, has been won upon a subject, mean or even horrible or, what may affront his sense of propriety more violently, upon a subject too small to have deserved all that patient workmanship. The success, he may decide, was not worth achieving, because it was not worth the man who achieved it. Or he may lay a still more damaging count: he may judge that it was worth *that artist*, but that he was somehow, and quite

signally, less than *a man*. And if the critic should be the artist himself, the measure of his success must be the measure of his dissatisfaction. But the artist may fail; his skill may fall short of his purpose in the handling of his materials, his instruments, and in the arrangement, the treatment of his subject, the several parts of which he may not appropriately have set, in fit relation each one with the others; and though we may be charmed both by his subject and by his material, we know that he has failed. There may be yet another cause of failure; all that he has selected may be, of its kind and in itself, wholly delightful; but it may not be enough; one thing only may be lacking, but that, if the want is felt, the one thing needful to give unity and wholeness to his work.

But failure, which can be thus estimated, need not be disastrous nor even discouraging. The artist's range may be wide; the plan of his work may be upon a vast scale though not complete; the defect, it is true, may be not only in execution, but in the plan itself; a great conception still awaiting the last, the unifying idea, may have brought provisionally and even prophetically into relationship ideas not hitherto laid together, and ready now to be made

alive by a final, though tarrying inspiration. To contemplate such unfinished work may give the critic a troubled joy, as of balanced expectancy; and if he is convinced that the man himself who has attained so much will attain no more, his hope is rather quickened than checked, since it becomes a hope no longer based on the promise of one man, but on the creative potency of mankind, upon the unheralded but dimly presaged birth of some other who will fulfil what has been heroically begun, and heroically left incomplete. Indeed this sense of something yet to be attained, this recognition of pregnant failure, richer than sterile victory, and the tingling passion of waiting make the legacy bequeathed to the world by rare and titanic artificers.

Of their work we may say that it is perfect; but not that it is finished. Yet we not uncommonly use this word "finished" when we intend to offer praise; but we offer it to artists and work of a quite different order. When technique overtakes its purpose, it is finished; it may be memorised, and repeated by the hands that wrought it; it may even be stereotyped or set in a pattern or sold as a method, for other hands to use. But technique which

overtakes, overlies and crushes its purpose; or, we had better say robs its purpose of what is distinctly human and personal. Technique, I suppose, is the sum of the devices by which we seek to attain an object; and we are confronted by a face of irony however we proceed. Do we win what we set out to get? Then our technique is finished, and the thing for which we toiled, proved a mere *thing*, no adequate guerdon for the infinite spirit which is ours. Do we miss what we pursued? Are we for ever baffled in our search? Does every success (as we might once have reckoned it) make success (as we must needs reckon it now) more remote? Why then, though our technique may be a marvel even to our grudging critics, it is marvellous to us only by showing how far short it comes of what we want. But if it comes short of its end then is it technique indeed? Does an imperfect technique deserve its title? We may return to this question and to another which is involved with it. For the moment let us accept the facts (1) that a technique which fulfils also destroys its purpose, inasmuch as it achieves what cannot satisfy us; and (2) that a purpose which eludes our technique also eludes us.

Here two problems present themselves to us.

We have to admit, and for the most part are happy enough to admit, that it is the baffling margin, the inscrutable remainder, which quickens our life and stirs our activity. Technique itself was brought into being by us because we were, dimly and yet conclusively, aware of a something which we wanted; and it would appear that the mere continuance, and certainly the development of technique depend upon there being for us an unachieved something, realised as unrealised. The clumsy contradiction of language may here help to give clearness to our meaning. Now it seems to be a condition of life that there should be a recognised insufficiency, a hunger and thirst, unsatisfied and unslaked; or, to be more exact, satisfied and slaked, but for a moment, and then reawakened and reawakening us by the insistence, the urgency of their demand. I say 'for a moment': I mean for a measurable span of time—longer or shorter makes no difference when set against the infinite reach of a life, which is for ever in pursuit of something beyond its grasp. But this moment, a moment, as we now see of temporary and provisional satisfaction, like some resting place upon a journey, is the point at which a critical argument is begun.

It is, of course, a pleasant moment, a place where rest at least is to be had. And our argument is simply this: shall we go on or not? Why not stay where we are and as we are? We shall do well, we tell ourselves, to avoid haste; let us see what sort of foothold we have here; let us look out upon the view around and downwards; let us not too eagerly and quickly look up. Let us, we say again, using another and a homelier image, digest our food in quietness before taking new exercise. These words are wise but they are often followed, if not accompanied, by a thought unwise: the thought of staying, not for a short interval, but always, where we are. Our technique has served us well; it has carried us to the utmost point which was in our view when we set out; and if it has not carried us to a further point which is now upon our wider horizon, let us not blame it or ourselves; our technique is 'finished' and we—why, we are 'middle-aged.' We take torpor for serenity, and 'settle *down*.' To be sure, we should not wish other people to say just this about us; we should not gladly suffer them (the fools) to call us 'middle-aged'; we should prefer them to call us sensible and stable, persons on whom you can reckon; whom you know

where to find, knowing that you will find them precisely where you left them. But do what we may, and let our friends use every subtilty of amiable deception, we feel at heart that the quality with which 'middle-age' has been, now irrevocably, associated might also be named death, were it not that death itself is a transition, and this quality is a mere permanence, duller than death, and more deadening. It is sheer monotony, whether of complacent success, or of acquiescent failure. This quality belongs to no special period of life: 'middle-age' may fall upon a man at five-and-twenty; another may lightly escape its pursuit at sixty; in the hard bestead forties a third may wage a doubtful fight; upon some its numbing hand is never cast. But if it comes, and at whatever period, it shows us people who have decided to stay where they are; whose desires are satisfied; embalmed by their own hands, they are buried alive in the tomb of their own achievement; their technique is finished. They are often accounted by other men, and resolutely try to reckon themselves, as good; and how is simplicity to be denied them? The accustomed routine of engagements and duties, all admirably fulfilled; the circle of their well-afforded

pleasures; their judicious charities; their outlook, backward upon the past through which their competent virtues have led to so prosperous a present, and forward upon a future which holds no threatening cloud of change; themselves in the exact centre of their world, and a centre which is no cold mathematical point, but rather a revolving easy chair—all this makes up that balance of parts, that system of relationships well schemed, which we very properly call simplicity. But it is the simplicity of well-found 'middle-age'; it is the goodness of the respectable citizen.

We must not grudge to such persons the tribute of our admiration; if we are such persons we are ready to claim a like tribute for ourselves. One title only shall we reject, if ever it is offered to us; it is the title of artist. And yet we cannot quite properly thrust it from us. We have sought a goal, we have set up an ideal; and we have chosen the road that led to it, the materials and instruments appropriate for its accomplishment; we have successfully done what was necessary to our purpose; we are of the number of those who have their reward. An ideal we have proposed to ourselves and attained it. Yet bitter to us as the title of artist

is that other designation of idealist. Practical people we boast ourselves; a solid house; the public school for the boys, a good security at the bank, some comfortable directorships, efficient servants, a pew in the church, a box (more costly this) at the winter concerts, a place secured (by well distributed subscriptions and donations) in heaven, a seat (why not!) or a reasonable prospect of a seat in the House—all these are our practical objects, and objects attained; why should we call ourselves or suffer ourselves to be called 'idealists.' Why, just because it is these things which we have elected to make into a whole, an ordered unity; and with that purpose have elaborated and put into effective operation our special 'technique.'

It is true, 'idealist' clings more often to the hem of the scantier garments of men who have other aims. There are those for instance who affect a cloistered virtue. In the world they must be, but so as not to be of the world, they try to be as little in it as may be. They even pride themselves on being out of it—out of the fashion, out of the race, out of the crowd. But they too are making a selection from the world; they too wish to make of what they select a

whole, an ordered composition; not a palace attracts them, nor the life of the great; not the suburban villa with its walled and fenced garden, its trim drive, its liveried trees; a cottage for them, a single room perhaps and in it content, the fixed smile of conscious virtue, the steady tenour of precise rectitude, the even temper, the cultivated humility of manner, the studious simplicity of dress, the pretty piety,—without, the noisy dirty world; within, the little enclosure, the ideal won, preserved and petrified.

Such persons, who with a wider or a narrower range have arrived where they would be, done what they meant to do, and got what it was their purpose to get and to keep, command the tribute which we pay willingly or perforce to success: our liking they may not command.

But there are others, and them we are glad to love, whose life seems to be a very finished thing, and they have wrought it to its composite harmony by a method which they are fain to avow. Old age provides some very beautiful instances in this kind. An old man who has moved at large in the world and daringly explored it and pressed the vitality, which he once with so conscious a pride enjoyed, to many experiments in living, may have got a

distaste of some or many of the savours which once gratified and stimulated him; or he may have become at last diffident of his own power, afraid of the distractions which once presented themselves to him as a delightful variety; he may have surprised in himself an uncertainty of temper, a failure of nerve; and he determines to restrict himself to a quieter mode, to smaller ways, he accepts a self-restraint which enjoins a sane, a valetudinarian, monotony. So he believes he can keep himself in hand. Such a man, avoiding the occasions of annoyance, may preserve a very even courtesy, the regimen under which he puts his spirit may be as firm and as salutary as that which he prescribes for his body. He pursues a smooth path along a level round, and if he gets no far-reaching views, he suffers no dizziness; not as once with quick and hazardous stride at the beck of a mutable ambition but with a slow dignity he travels ever forward with a practised cheerfulness to the inevitable, but not dreaded, end.

There is for the onlooker a charm in the spectacle of this voluntary self-limitation; and if as he holds it in a lingering and critical regard he discovers within himself something akin to

the sense with which he surveys the neat desolation of winter in a garden when the warm and exuberant sap has gone out of the trees and the wind moans for sheer loneliness amid boughs which had rustled in the bravery of twinkling leaves, now fallen and swept away, why still the charm remains.

Or a girl, strong and beautiful and not unaware of her power and her promise may elect a way of life in which her gifts are devoted to some special vocation, in pursuit of which she moves along a narrow road, walled high on either hand by a convention which she adopts or a rule which she fashions for herself. It is simplicity she desires, and to shun the dangers and free herself from the extravagances, of a world which she might (as others believed) have adorned. The passion and fervour of youth are directed into a strict course; they move perhaps not the less impetuously; but they move within a canal, its edges stiff with spiritual masonry; the neighbouring fields unflooded, to be sure, but alas! unwatered by that generous life. Simplicity she desires; and catholicity she wins; for we may not deny that a temperate order, a sweet perfection, a definite unity she has attained. And if the beholder is

not unconscious of tingling, restrained tears as he looks on this achievement, he is not unconscious, either, of its charm, the charm, this also of a deliberate ascetism.

But clearly the ascetic chooses not all the world, but a part of it only; he rejects what he finds unsuitable for his purpose; he takes less than he might take, because he will have nothing to mar and break the unity at which he aims.

We need not look for other examples. Every mode of life is the form in which men seek to express and by expressing to achieve an ideal; and our problem is that the moment the expression is wrought and the end attained, life, which cannot however be brought to a just termination, seems to be no longer worth maintaining. To be sure, men for a time deceive themselves, and believe that the unvarying repetition of a formula which, when it was first struck out, appeared to be a miracle of aptness and yet better than a miracle, the deserved reward of well-directed and patiently sustained effort, is itself worth while. But at their heart, the ultimate proof of their humanity, lurks a secret discontent, mordant, corrosive, destined at last in this world or we know not in what

other (since it claims for itself an immortality of baffled hope) to eat through to the surface of that pleasant smoothly rounded life, and break its symmetry.

Is there then no peace for men, but the temporary dullness of those who cannot see that fruition is decay, who take the sentence 'they have their reward' not as a doom but as a concise recognition of their 'success'? Or is the general art of life bound by the same condition as the special arts, say, of the painter or writer; namely that those who should be called great are those who break their hearts for what they cannot get, and those called successful who make of success a termination of interest, the bourne of hopeful effort, limited because nothing remains yet to be discovered or even guessed? For then it should appear that the great fail to achieve that unity missing which they miss artistry itself; and that they who make their redoubtable way to finished achievement, rob achievement of vitality.

A passage in Tagore's *Personality* comes to my mind; "For revealment of idea, form is absolutely necessary. But the idea which is infinite cannot be expressed in forms which are absolutely finite. Therefore forms must always

move and change, they must necessarily die to reveal the deathless. The expression, as expression, must be definite which it can only be in its form; but at the same time, as the expression of the infinite, it must be indefinite, which it can only be in its movement. Therefore when the world takes its shape it always transcends its shape; it carelessly runs out of itself to say that its meaning is more than it can contain." Not more vividly, not more vehemently, can the contradiction with which we are occupied be drawn. "When the world takes its shape it always transcends its shape." But is this transcending of its shape a mere lapse into shapelessness? For shapelessness, formlessness, is the denial, the abandonment of expression. An impatient reader of Tagore might be misled by his following sentence to suppose no less. "It *carelessly* runs out of itself to say that its meaning is more than what it can contain." "Carelessly," to be sure; now that all that care can compass has been got; no care, we must conceive, has been spared by him, whoever he may be, who has brought it to pass that *his* world (whatever it may be) takes its shape; it is after and not before that event that the world transcends its shape; and now the artificer

can afford a carelessness which he has not hitherto allowed in himself; he needs not now to care; he has made a larger world than he dreamt of, which moving, carries him with it, which breaking its mould hurls him with its own exuberant force into some ampler space, into a universe to be conquered by a fresh effort of care, the repeated purpose of unification, one day itself to be broken in the very moment of fulfilment, when the man grown again, and his world with its better but still inadequate expression of the idea animating him and it, are borne through the burst doors and walls of a success now stifling into the rich desolation of a new chaos, a field of new labour. The form which is filled is at once outgrown; the banks topped are at once overflowed; the sufficient is also the abundant life.

As for some spirits a superfluity of naughtiness is the proof, though it cannot be the exact measure, of their vitality; so we may believe (with Tagore) that for other spirits the evidence of their living force is to be found in the superfluity of their goodness.

There are those who are good enough; no fault can be found with them; there are those (quite other natures) who when every demand

that can be made upon them is satisfied, have yet a balance; they have a margin of credit; they have a superfluous goodness. They have something as it were to play with, to operate with; they can make adventures, and are fain to run risks. What is more, they make costly adventures; they suffer losses; when their world transcends its shape, the moment is one of not apparent but real ruin; homeless for a while they roam; freed at once and bereft of what had been their shelter they will find the invigorating also a bleak wind; but they set out in the teeth of it, cold but determined, exiled by their own virtue and power. They cannot brook the fate of Ulysses returned to safety and home, and condemned to stay still, himself the unmoving monument of his own travels.

But such spirits, though they may deserve and win the applause or at least stir the wonder of weaker or idler men, are not the 'simple and the good.' Can we yet find an argument by which to free the 'simple and the good' from the charge of stolidity and of stagnation? There is, I think, an adventure more daring than that of those who fare forth in search of adventure; it calls for a finer poise, a stronger nerve,

a more vivid and a better trained imagination. It is the adventure of sustained expectancy. Those others whom we credit more commonly and of course justly with the adventurous spirit, go out from whatever territory they have won, to seek beyond its confines, the further, the uttermost, infinite. These, having wrought with laborious but quiet hands whatever they set themselves to achieve, refining their technique, as they exalted and approached the object to which it was devoted, find at length their instruments, which together make up their life's strength, worn through, and await a consummation which they cannot achieve, an event in which mortality is swallowed in immortality; they can go no further and wish no further to go; they can do no more and wish to do no more; they cannot now even repeat what they have so patiently taught themselves to do; they may not break the thin barrier which separates their perfect and therefore finite work from the universal which is not theirs; they wait rather for the inrush of the infinite upon them; they are ready, not to claim, but to be claimed and possessed by what transcends them. Ready they are, but not overeager; they hold themselves with decent resig-

nation; they wait, in silence because they wait in confidence. And they are never cloyed by the satiety which success, enjoyed even for a moment, brings with it; they are never disappointed, for they never have hoped for what they could never achieve. Only, they meant to do what they could; and with that purpose fulfilled, have learnt to wait till, at the just hour, they hear the annunciation of the Infinite, which will enter, absorb and transcend their now perfected but finite nature, and till the signal is given can keep, so athletic is their spirit, that balanced tension.

These are the simple and the good.

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